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POEMS

*“In what strange lines of beauty should I draw thee?
In what sad purple dreamshine paint thee true?
How should I make them ‘know’ who never saw thee?
How should I make them ‘love’ who never knew?”*

ELEGIES



P O E M S

By LOUISA SHORE

With a Memoir by her Sister

ARABELLA SHORE

And an Appreciation by

FREDERIC HARRISON



JOHN LANE: *The Bodley Head*

LONDON & NEW YORK

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I

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THE following notice is an attempt not so much at narrative as at some kind of portraiture ; for it treats of one whose life, passed in a world of her own, had in it none of what are called events. But in the small circle that knew her she was loved and admired both as a woman and a writer. It is hoped that some idea of what she was herself may be gathered from this Memorial. And if the sketch, slight and faint as it needs must be, of a personality so delicate and retiring, should yet have the good fortune to draw attention to the poems which follow—poems which are the expression of her whole being—I shall feel that the attempt has been justified.

Louisa Shore was the third and youngest daughter of the Reverend Thomas Shore, M.A., ex-Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford ; she was

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born on the 20th February in 1824 and died 24th May 1895. Her father was a man of high cultivation and singular moral worth; the subordination of private interests to considerations of conscience was the habit of his life. During his children's early years he maintained his household by receiving into it a succession of young men, whom he prepared for college. Among these pupils some in after days attained distinction, and, in the cases of Lord Canning and the late Lord Granville, celebrity.* He was of a quiet, independent character, and firm in the sense and practice of duty, though too modest and retiring for his merits to be widely known. In this respect his youngest daughter greatly resembled him. She was, moreover, the sister of one whose remains, under the title of "Emily Shore's Journal," have in the last few years raised a sympathetic interest in many readers, and some of whose remarkable qualities were shared by her we now write of. The readers of Emily's Journal will be aware in what a healthy

* Sir John Kaye, in his "History of the Indian Mutiny," when sketching Lord Canning's early life, justly characterises his tutor as "that ripe scholar and worthy Christian gentleman."

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atmosphere of wise freedom and mild restraint, of mental culture, of open-air joys and observation of Nature these happy children were reared. The father's studious habits and quiet heroism, the charm of the gentle mother, the sister's kindling example, and the country homes in which Louisa's childhood and most of her after years were past, had no small influence in moulding her character.

Louisa was a bright, pretty child, "with rosy cheeks and shining curls," as she unconsciously paints herself in one of her poems ; cheerful and active in her quiet way, though by temperament rather silent and reserved, chiefly from extreme shyness. She was always known as an emphatically "good" child, docile, obedient, and never "in a scrape." Her early tastes were for outdoor play, runs in the garden, and the observation and petting of all creatures that came in her way ; indoors, for helping her mother—at whose side she was constantly to be found—and a good deal of miscellaneous reading.

Her sister Emily's passion for study was not in her ; her temperament made her averse to hard work of any kind, but she seemed to

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imbibe knowledge intuitively. Her "headwork" was always well done. Her father, who taught his children himself, spoke of her as "the accurate little Greek grammarian, who brought up her exercises without a blunder." But in after life she did not carry on this pursuit except occasionally, when it was a help to her literary work. Even at modern languages, which she was fond of, she would not work regularly, but her knowledge, as far as it went, was very exact. French, Italian, and Portuguese were familiar to her. She knew something also of Spanish; and in the first three languages she read much and easily, and could converse more or less in them.

In her tenth year the family quitted Brookhouse, the home at Potton, in Bedfordshire, where Louisa was born, and removed to Woodbury—properly Woodbury Hall—some three miles distant, the beautiful home so fondly dwelt on in Emily's Diary. Here her observant faculties visibly developed. Following, as was natural, her eldest sister's lead, she became a student of natural objects, which indeed formed her constant pleasure through life, and her kindly disposition

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early showed itself in the construction of a hospital for sick bees.

Between the ages of thirteen and fifteen her very marked leaning towards literature showed itself unmistakably. Then there came signs of delicate health ; but the symptoms were not such as to cause definite alarm : they pointed rather to a general want of vigour. Indeed, at no time after this did she manifest the buoyant and active spirits of thoroughly sturdy youth. Her mother and Emily promptly restricted her studies ; she was made to rise later than the other children and to join the breakfast of the “grown-ups,” in her place at a small table close to her mother. In her quaint fashion she commented on this arrangement, saying “ I sit like a bulb, an excrescence, by mamma’s side.”

At the close of 1838 the home, which had now been fixed in the beautiful New Forest, was broken up, and the whole family migrated to Madeira, in the vain hope of saving the life of that gifted elder sister, which there in six months was brought by consumption to a close. The rest of the family remained a year more in that

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enchanted island, their residence being a large romantic quinta called the "Angustias."* But here the languor which had already shown itself greatly increased. She pined for England and enjoyed little of all that lay or lived around her ; and those who came across her, grave and quiet, while "her peers and playmates" were revelling in the glad rush of young life, hardly knew what to make of her. Yet even then her poetic genius was unfolding in its own springtide fulness ; but the poems which were poured out incessantly, and which even at fifteen show a wonderful ripeness and strength of feeling, were seen by no one save her one sister. She wrote from sheer delight in the employment, without a thought of exhibition or any idea of merit in the production. She had indeed even in childhood written verse, and was haunted by distressing childish night-dreams, in which she fancied others of her family surprising and persisting in reading aloud her verses in spite of her terrors and tears.

Various changes of residence followed upon the return from Madeira in 1840. Her first

* Meaning "sorrows," from a chapel in the house dedicated to "Our Lady of Anguish."

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small social experiences began during a visit at just sixteen years old to a dear friend in Fulham, who gave her some taste of London pleasures. Scarce more than a child as she was, she knew how to describe these in lively letters to her sister confidante. She was taken to some agreeable parties, in one of which she was introduced to Mrs. Nelson Coleridge, daughter of the poet, the beautiful "Eugenia" as she was then familiarly called, married to her cousin, and better known to posterity by her real name of Sara Coleridge. This charming lady talked to her almost the whole evening, to her delight, answering all her eager questions about Wordsworth and Coleridge; the husband standing by inquired of her hostess, "Who is that whom my wife is talking to? I never saw such a perfect little Hebe in my life."

In this respect she altered but little through life; she preserved to the last in aspect and character a something of childlike innocence. Her early shyness changed to retiringness; always yielding to others, she was thus naturally placed a good deal in the background. Self-assertion was impossible to her.

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At another party she saw Mr. Pierce Butler and his wife (Fanny Kemble), and remarked with a satiric touch rather unusual with her, though pardonable at thoughtless sixteen, "When I saw Mr. Butler, I said to myself, 'How could she?' but when afterwards I saw *her*, I said, 'How could he?'" Mrs. Kemble was not then so well known to the world for her fine qualities of mind and heart and her powers of fascination as she has been of late years ; and of course Louisa could see no more than others did.

Four years of great contentment were then spent at Sunbury in Middlesex, perhaps the happiest period of the two sisters' girlhood. Time had softened their grief for the loss of the beloved Emily, and for the parting from their excellent eldest brother, who was pursuing a deservedly prosperous official career in India.* The family party now consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Shore, their three youngest children, and a

* His great-uncle, Sir John Shore, created Lord Teignmouth, had been Governor-General of India at the end of the last century. A son of his, the Hon. Frederick Shore, was highly esteemed in those days for his earnest advocacy of the rights of the natives.

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small number of young boys taken (for obvious reasons) as pupils instead of the young men of former years. The society of many pleasant acquaintances was freely enjoyed here, and Louisa had really a fair share of girlish gaiety of spirits.

This is the place for a few specimens of youthful vivacity in conversation with intimates. She was quite a girl, when on "Royal Oak" day she saw some elder friends wearing sprays of oakleaves in their dress, and earnestly begged them to tell her "what was the contrary to oak" that she might put it on.

It was at the same age that, conversing with her sister on an unfortunate love affair and the blight it was supposed to have brought on the principal sufferer, she answered, with an image drawn from her young brother's Australian grazing experiences, "No, not a blight, only the burning of the grass that makes it grow all the richer afterwards." She afterwards more sententiously observed, "The misfortune in love affairs is that both men and women have an ideal for their object a little higher than their own merits entitle them to."—She was shown by a

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rising barrister a letter from the well-known A. W. Kinglake asking him to take a brief for him as he (Kinglake) had business elsewhere. A friend standing by (a literary critic) inquired of her if she did not think that was "selling his client." The young girl answered promptly, "Not at all; if the client could trust Mr. Kinglake with his cause, he might trust him with the choice of a substitute." "I give you credit for the answer," said the lawyer. The philosophical reviewer was silent, but smiled approval.

But perhaps her chief happiness was in the companionship of her one sister, and their still younger brother, with whom much time was delightfully passed in boatings on the river. The boy had some fine gifts of his own, and became intensely dear to both. But when he left them as an emigrant to Australia, and, in thus severing the merry group, robbed the Sunbury life of much of its glamour, deeper interests began to fill the void. Louisa's attachment to her mother had been hitherto her most conspicuous family trait; now, without diminishing this, began the ardent affection for her sister,

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which was fully reciprocated, and made the joy and the support of their future lives. The feeling was externally quiet, like everything about her ; but in all cases which called forth peculiar sympathy it found strong and devoted expression.

Here, too, Louisa's poetical powers began fully to unfold. Her work hitherto had had the crudeness and imperfections of early youth ; but when she had attained her twentieth year it had a character and a finish of its own, and though she never, as yet, thought of publication, she now worked in earnest with an artist's aspirations. It was here too, in her twenty-first year, that she took seriously to what became her leading taste through life—dramatic composition. The earliest suggestion of this was probably given by Sir Henry Taylor's "Philip van Artavelde," the first reading of which was an era in her life ; but the subject chosen for her first play was classical. Its hero was Hannibal, for whom she had imbibed a passionate, one might say a personal, enthusiasm, as depicted in Arnold's "History of Rome," and studied by her afterwards with great care in the original authorities. The eye

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of memory can see this girl of twenty sitting in a flowery arbour in the garden, with the history of Livy or Polybius on her knee, and her scraps of manuscript around her. The drama was sketched out, and a first play finished at that age; a second and superior version—essentially the same—followed in two or three years. It was the praise given to this by her father, an excellent classical scholar, that lighted up her first faint modest desires for fame. “I never thought I could be ambitious,” she said, “but papa’s words have made me so.” But it was laid by, publishing being an expensive luxury that could not then be dreamed of.

In 1845 the serious illness of Mrs. Shore caused the break-up of the Sunbury home, and the family removed to London. The three years there were made pleasant by a good deal of congenial, including literary, society. Former pupils renewed their old friendship, and fresh ties were formed.

Again, however, ill-health came in the way—Mr. Shore’s this time. His long years of unremitting labour were brought to an end by cruel neuralgic sufferings, and country life was

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resumed, to the satisfaction at least of his wife and youngest daughter.

Twenty-two years' tenancy of Elmers End Cottage, a charming little abode in Kent, followed. The home here, though quiet and rural, was by no means secluded; pleasant society was always at hand, visits to other country places or to London frequently took place, and Louisa's lively letters to sister and friends exhibit plenty of interest in life, and even social joyousness of a fresh and simple kind. A change full of varied interest was made in 1851-3 by an eighteen months' residence in Paris and its neighbourhood. Frequent *soirées* of a cosmopolitan type introduced the family to delightful English and French society, and, above all, they made the valued acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Browning. These somewhat exciting experiences had their effect on Louisa's quiet mind, but she returned the same as ever to her simple but well-filled country life. About twenty-seven, her mind's natural and irrepressible growth, enlarged by many deep-lying human experiences, made the outlet of poetical utterance more than ever a necessity; and to this period

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and a few years later belong the best of her published work.

Her first appearance in print was during the Crimean War in 1854, when the patriotic passion overflowed in a short poem sent merely as an impromptu in a letter to her sister. The sister equipped it with the title of "War Music," and, without a hint to Louisa, sent it to the *Spectator*, where the authoress read it with great astonishment. The poem became popular, and several more followed in the same journal, the final result being a tiny joint volume by the two sisters, of which the best pieces were hers, called "War Lyrics."

Life had for Louisa its usual pains, its partings and bereavements, and its disillusiones as well. Here in midway life the sisters lost their mother ; next year came news that the beloved brother (whose return from his long exile and sore fight with life they were daily expecting) had perished suddenly at sea ; and three years after, 1863, the worn-out, widowed father went to his repose.

But this time of trouble had braced her faculties ; "Hannibal" was taken up again, "carried on," as she said, "through much sorrow," revised

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and enlarged, and finally given to the world in 1861. This was done with the encouragement of her now aged father, who lived long enough to read it aloud with a parent's pride to a small but sympathetic and happy audience. This drama attracted the attention of historical students and literary critics, alike for its severe accuracy and its glow of enthusiasm, and was indeed very favourably noticed by the *Athenæum* and the *Saturday Review*, at that time the two rulers of the literary world. It was published anonymously, Louisa at all times shrinking timidly from public notice, and it required the suggestion and persuasion of others to induce her to appear in print at all.

After their father's death the sisters remained eight years in their desolate home, and then they found a new one in Firgrove, at Sunninghill, Berkshire. Here in an interregnum of poetical occupation she imbibed an interest in political and social questions which lasted and strengthened to the end. In taking up these interests she followed almost instinctively, as in her early literary outset, the steps of her more actively originating sister. This was caused by no kind

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of inferiority, but by her extreme modesty and that languor, in some respects amounting to indolence, which always required kindling by special incentives. But she gave her work a character of its own and, small in quantity as it was, its value much surpassed that of her leader, as the sister was always proud to feel and to avow.

She was a staunch Liberal ; but over and above considerations of party, her heart went out to every high and generous cause. She made no public appearances ; her work was done contentedly in the shade. One of the first causes that she took up was Woman's Suffrage, which drew from her an essay entitled the "Citizenship of Women Socially Considered." * This pamphlet, her first performance in prose, written with much masculine vigour, won for her admirers who never saw her face. But the labour and excitement of its preparation prostrated her, and she uttered from the sofa to which weakness too often consigned her, a resolution never again to attempt a serious prose work, and she kept her word.

* This appeared first in the *Westminster Review*, and has just been reprinted by the Women's Printing Society.

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She had, however, for a year or so an on-and-off correspondence with Liberal journals on political, social, or religious subjects, and sometimes a little smart controversy ; but it was long before she gave her name to any printed work.

Her rare appearances in society were now and again marked by incidents of interest. In 1873 she was invited to a small London party for the kind purpose of making her acquainted with Mr. John Morley, then at the height of his more purely literary fame, whose career she had watched with ardent admiration, inspired not only by his brilliant powers, but more especially by the lofty and earnest tone of thought which marked such work as his "Compromise." They had a long, and to her a most agreeable, conversation, in which she expressed so warmly her delight in the works of George Meredith, then an almost unknown writer, that Mr. Morley urged her to address to this as yet unappreciated genius the expression of her admiring homage. The suggestion was adopted, and for a month she remained in suspense regarding the success of her daring overture. Then it turned out that Mr. Meredith had for once been made to experi-

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ence a taste of that bewilderment in which his own printed pages occasionally involve even his most sworn devotees.* He failed, namely, to decipher the signature of his admirer. When at length the mystery had been cleared up there ensued an interesting intercourse of some years' duration between him and the two sisters.

After nine years they again changed their residence and for the last time. Orchard Poyle, near Taplow, was the first home owned by themselves, and here they lived together for fourteen years. During this period Louisa wrote nothing but desultory fragments of dramas and single scenes, and published nothing save a few pieces composed some years before, as contributions to a small joint-volume of "Elegies and Memorials," which appeared in 1890.†

Here I may be allowed to pause in order to give, if I can, some closer views of the character that had been maturing during the thirty-two years of dual life.

* I am bound to acknowledge that this ingenious application of the incident was supplied by a friend.

† See the list of her published works appended to this Memoir.

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The retiring habits I have spoken of had been fostered partly by the delicate health which shrank from exertion ; sometimes by some strong, absorbing interest, and especially by an entire absence of belief in any social gifts of her own. The excitements of personal vanity, the craving for recognition, for intellectual distinction, ambition, in short, of any kind, that beset other minds, seemed not to touch her. She maintained a serene independence, only asking perfect freedom for a life of reading, thought, and reverie, in a beautiful country home, subject but to those domestic ties which had always formed an essential part of her existence. She loved to dream, but her dreams were not of herself so much as of others, of those she knew and of strangers, even of persons and scenes in the historic past ; while in the living, larger world that she would not enter, she had an ever-growing interest. Social questions and world problems occupied her mind to an extent which no one who did not know her well, or had not read those writings she habitually kept to herself, could have suspected.

Those who did know her can testify to her

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clear good sense, and to her pleasant talk when quite at her ease, to her pithy observations and sudden quiet strokes of wit or quaint humour. When once conversing in Paris with an eminent traveller, who spoke of the advantage of knowing many races and their languages, she rejoined, "Yes, you cannot make life longer, but you can make it wider;" a remark which confirmed what was often expressed by her friends that "she always contrived in a quiet way to throw light on a subject." In spite of her self-effacing modesty she had yet an influence not perhaps fully realised at the time by others, and which certainly would have surprised no one more than herself. She was placidly incredulous when sisterly fondness tried, by reports of praise, to awaken a little innocent vanity.

She had of course her share in the rather numerous acquaintance gathered by the family in the course of years, and amongst them were friendships, the dearest of which formed the great charm and solicitude of her life. Besides these loving enthusiasms, she had sympathies always alive, and her feeling for others in little and great matters, was almost too sensitively vigi-

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lant. But she was not profuse in demonstration save in her warmly affectionate letters, and, as she herself said, always found difficulty in expressing her feelings. Even to those she most loved caressing language was unusual with her; but the bright smile with which she would greet them, or the soft mockery which replied sometimes to laudatory and loving words, were as well worth having.

It is difficult to do justice to her unexact character (self-assertion was, as we have said, impossible to her). The pain given by offences which in most other minds awaken some resentment, with her took shape only in a feeling of disappointment. "I am humbled who was humble," she once said, half pleasantly quoting Mrs. Browning on some such occasion. Only once, when an irresistible outpouring of her deeper thoughts by letter to one, a *litterateur* in whose intellectual sympathy she believed, was met by what seemed to be a cold repulse, and a fondly nursed hope thereby destroyed, did she show that she was wounded. But all that occurred was that her bright colour fled, she turned quite pale, and said in a faint voice, "I

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have not deserved this." And the incident, though I believe not forgotten, was not again alluded to.

She was by nature very religious ; nor did the dropping away of an orthodox creed disturb the deep and devout sense of duty which dwelt within her. A robust habit of independent thought had made conventional modes of belief an impossibility to her even in early youth. "Thinks for herself" was an acute-minded barrister's early pronouncement when asked what in his opinion was her leading characteristic. As, nevertheless, she had a great reluctance to shock other minds and hurt other feelings, her nonconformity was silent and unaggressive ; but no doubt it helped to make for her an existence somewhat apart.

Her gentleness was by no means of an insipid kind, being combined with a good deal of critical severity. She once found her sister busy over 300 papers sent in by competitors for a poetical prize, and, ready as she always was to help her, stretched out her hand for a bundle of them, observing, "Give them to me ; I'm the hanging judge." When she had gone through her por-

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tion she observed that most of them ought to be put in the seventh, that is, the lowest class, and that for the others a new and still lower class should be created.

Nor was her habit of dreaming incompatible with practical activity when effort seemed necessary. For example, one night whilst yet it was dark, though dawn was near, she heard a trampling in the stable-yard, and going from bed to window she dimly discerned that the carriage horse had got out of the meadow where she was wont to be left at night, and was making her way to the gate beyond the stable out into the high-road. No time was to be lost ; she threw a cloak over her nightdress, put her feet into slippers, and, thus attired, rushed out with a heavy rain pouring down upon her loose streaming hair. She caught the animal in time and led her back to the meadow over the broken-down gate, which she showed the greatest reluctance to cross. She then observed that another little gate into the garden was out of repair and easily opened, and hurried back to the house to fetch some string. In the meanwhile the delinquent had once more got out, pushed open the outer yard gate, and

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was actually some way out up the road. Still, through the streaming rain she pursued her, and brought her back just as the grey dawn showed her a cart and man coming towards her along the road. She then heaped up the wreck of the field gate into a substantial barrier, tied up the other gate with strong cord, and returned to lay her drenched hair on the pillow with a good conscience.

To return to her way of life at Orchard Poyle. Here her disinclination to seek society, to leave her home, to depart in any way from the quiet, unvarying life she preferred, continued and increased. But it was not a selfish, inactive life ; her last years were spent in attention to home duties and interests, enlivened by her few warm friendships and general kindnesses, and marked above all by devoted affection and continual care given to the companion of her home. The years since they were left wholly alone had been years of the closest, most unbroken union ; all the closer, no doubt, that two markedly distinct personalities viewed and handled the stuff of which that life in common was made up. They were not unfrequently apart, but the intercourse

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of letters was as tender, as abundant, and almost as satisfying as that of personal presence.

Of this united life there is now no more to narrate. In 1895, after three months of altered health, the last fortnight of Louisa's life was spent at Wimbledon, whither she had been conveyed in hopes of the benefit of a change, and there, after thirty-four hours of entire unconsciousness, she painlessly expired on May 24, three months and four days after her seventy-first birthday.

The picture of this "violet life," as one who of all her friends perhaps knew her best, tenderly called it, would not be complete without some touches of what cannot well be supplied by the hand of a near relation, the aspect presented to outside observers. I will premise that of the qualities which are apparent in external life, those which may be singled out as most characteristic of her were her translucent truthfulness and her tender humanity. These traits were well summed up by the above-mentioned friend, who spoke of her as this "guileless, gentlest of natures." Another who knew her well wrote, "Only those who loved her best could know the

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full beauty of her sweet, unselfish, *hidden* life ; she never spoke, nor seemed to think, of herself."

Her "beautiful face" has in these characterisations been frequently referred to ; but its most striking beauty was perhaps that of expression, though the features were good, especially as shown in the finely moulded, cameo-like profile. Her rich auburn hair, worn in youth in tresses, fine, soft, and silky, her bright complexion and sweet mouth, aided the childlike character which her face long retained.

But her "rare and beautiful nature," her "gentle voice," her "charm of manner," her gracious, welcoming smile and kindly interest in all who visited that home beyond which she scarcely ever went, are the traits chiefly dwelt on, alike by intimate friends and by those who saw her but once or twice. "I can never," wrote one to her sister, "think of you without Louisa, nor of Orchard Poyle without her sweet, gentle presence. I shall always picture her amongst her flowers, with her ready, kindly sympathy for every one, and her righteous indignation against wrong and oppression."

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"Even I," says another who knew her but slightly, "loved and valued the sweet, pure, noble soul of her from whom you are now parted." And one who had not seen her for several years wrote, "I hear her tones constantly, those tones of an exquisite sympathy, and I feel that she is not dead."

The editor of the "Journal of Education" says, "I recall your sister as a kind of spirit who looked down on all our fret and fume and turmoil as from a higher sphere, ready to aid and sympathise, but without any personal stake in the struggle." A literary clerical friend speaks of her "bright talk, her sweet countenance, and her enthusiastic interest in all that was lovely and true." And in a private letter, Mr. Frederic Harrison, whose critical estimate follows this Memoir, speaks of "the many graces of her beautiful nature."

At all times of her life she liked to be a good deal alone, and when her sister left her for months together, always urged that she wanted no company. "I can always read, think, and dream," she said.

Thus charming and beloved, though she was

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more vividly conscious of loving than of being loved, and of charms was not conscious at all, she was not unhappy. Her temperament was calm rather than joyous ; but she was fully happy after her fashion, when she called you out to listen to the first lark, or found a couple of titmice building their nest in the letter-box at the garden gate, and helped the tiny architects by gathering their moss for them ; when she verified by observation some curious bit of natural history, or discovered in the garden some lovely old-fashioned rose ; when in her wanderings round the grounds she caught a new vista through the woodlands, or some magical effect of light and shade, or took a long exploring drive in search of some romantic spot, with picturesque old houses and cottages—such a spot as she always dreamed of finding, to end her days in.

Very touching was the tranquil resignation with which in latter days, while still looking comparatively young, and in good health, she abandoned even the small share she had taken in outward and social life, and dwelt almost like a gentle shadow in her secluded home. There

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grew over her a quiet indifference to outside things, even to the subjects which had once most excited her ; she was living, as in truth she had done more or less all her days, in dream-land. And when finally her home activity ceased, and her interests grew languid, though not her affections—only her impulse to the manifestation of them—she still preserved what a friend described as her “sweet, sad content ;” and in this deep calm she passed away, May 24, 1895.

It may be well to add a chronological list of all the poems published in her lifetime, most of which have been already referred to.

1. “War Lyrics, by A. and L.” (Saunders and Otley), 1855. This little work, aided by the national enthusiasm for our brave soldiers in their fearful strife, reached a second edition in a fortnight.

2. “Gemma of the Isles, a Lyrical Drama by L.” (Saunders and Otley), 1859, a fairy-fiction, full of songs and poetical pictures, with a very slight thread of historical fact.

3. “Hannibal, a Drama in Two Parts” (Smith and Elder), 1861, anonymous. I have

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already described the slow and interrupted growth, through seventeen years, of this her first, and indeed most important, work.

4. "The Lost Son, a Domestic Drama," and "Ballads," which appeared in 1871 in a volume entitled, "Fra Dolcino and Other Poems, by A. and L." (Smith and Elder). This drama, whose chief feature is the commemoration of a beloved personality in the past, was written very hurriedly, under trying circumstances.

5. "Elegies and Memorials" (Kegan Paul), 1890. Regarding the "Elegies," the first and most important of the pieces she contributed, I will here quote, out of the numerous tributes paid to it from various quarters, those of the two personal friends to whom it was sent in manuscript—George Meredith and Robert Browning. The first acknowledges it as follows :

"BOX HILL, DORKING, *April* 9, 1876.

"The poem . . . a moon-sketch ; it has a breath of pure melody, coming of most tender feeling, with a certain haze proper to it, reminding me of a night scene by the sea . . . a beautiful poem of, I fear, no fancied sentiment,

MEMOIR

and winding up with such grave, good hopes as I share with you, and few at this time, though more than in old times, look to."

Mr. Browning writes :

" 19 WARWICK CRESCENT, *Nov.* 16, 1876.

" I have read the poem with just the result I expected ; no surprise at finding it very beautiful and touching . . . it is curious to find from what you have experienced, and in this case anticipate, that, being abundantly intelligible, and having a subject adapted to the sympathy of any one with sympathy to bestow, it is likely to lie in your sister's drawer because no magazine cares to publish it. What more does the dear, intelligent public want ? " *

In 1894 the poem was made known to Mr. Gladstone through Mrs. Drew, who replied, " My father wishes me to thank you for having sent him the little memorial poem, which he has read, and which has deeply impressed him. He

* The poem was offered to the distinguished editor of a leading Review, and at once sent back with the usual curt form of rejection.

MEMOIR

was saying to me only to-day that if he had known of it he would certainly have mentioned the authoress amongst the women poets he wrote of in an article some years ago."

The "Elegies," which was printed first by itself in 1883, for private circulation, has been much used in the Positivist services.

IN MEMORIAM

L. S.

*The Editor's best thanks are due to
MR. FREDERIC HARRISON for the
following Note, kindly supplied at
request, and with his permission
inserted here.*

IN MEMORIAM

L. S.

THE author of these poems was one who lived continuously a life of pure imagination in an ideal world of her own—one whose conceptions the busy world of to-day found little leisure to study, until she had withdrawn from it finally into the long silence. It is often said, how little do we know of many a rare quality in our midst, which the turmoil of life prevents us from valuing as we should. It was thus that the life and work of Louisa Shore passed almost unknown to the world at large.

Audience fit, though few, she had. But neither they, nor indeed she herself, quite understood the rank she might have held amongst contemporary poets, if she could have brought herself to claim her place—even to know what she might have claimed ; if her health, energies,

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and temperament had been more buoyant ; had not early bereavement and isolation from the active world cast her whole lyric mood into a permanent minor key. She had one of those delicate natures in which sorrow does not make itself strongly apparent, but sinks quietly and lastingly into the depths of their being. The death in their first youth of a loved sister, and then of a brother, the early loss of her mother, and the seclusion from the world of her father—and all this, together with uncertain health and a singular indifference (nay, rather an aversion) to the pleasures and distractions of conventional society—stamped upon all her intellectual products a note of uniform pathos, which the unthinking might easily mistake for hopelessness.

This tone is very marked even in her first verses as a girl in her 'teens, and it is maintained in "Gemma," in "Hannibal," in the "Elegies," and in the other dramas and lyrics. It was, I should have thought, rather a characteristic of her imagination than of her disposition, which, if far from elastic, was not otherwise prone to melancholy. But I speak from imperfect know-

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ledge, as one who came to be a friend of her family after the completion of her principal literary work. I did not make her acquaintance until she was somewhat past middle age, being myself much her junior, and of her retired life in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire I saw nothing. But, during the comparatively short period of her life when we often met, I learned to know something of the rare gifts of imagination and poetic instinct which she joined to a peculiar refinement and nobility of spirit.

It is this last feature of her mind and work—this ideality and nobility of spirit—which is, I think, the special distinction of Louisa Shore. Of all the men and women with whom in my literary life I have been thrown, she, I think, lived the most continuously alone with her own creations of great tragedies and fine aspirations. All her mental and moral characteristics, her own set purpose and outer circumstances, combined to detach her life from the world around, to plant it in an island of fancy, where her spirit refreshed itself from the great sources of all tragedy—pity and horror.

In this world of her own she chose to live,

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writing at long intervals to please herself, now and then printing some pieces at the request of her sister, but always without her name, and hardly making them known even to her near friends. This strict withdrawal from the public eye reminds us of a like peculiarity in a man of genius—Edward Fitzgerald, whose rare genius was only known to the general public after his death. He, as we know, wrote only to please himself; he destroyed, or sought to destroy, many a fine piece of his own work, even after it was in type. The friends of Edward Fitzgerald have saved his name from the public indifference to which he strove to consign it. And her friends very justly hope to do some such thing for the memory of Louisa Shore.

I knew her shortly after the publication of "Hannibal" (1861), which I read and re-read with admiration. It is rather a historical romance in verse than a drama proper. Its two parts, its length (more than 6000 lines), with more than forty personages, take it out of that order of poetry. As a historical romance, carefully studied from the original histories, it is a noble conception of a great hero; and the tragedy of

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the fall of Carthage and her glorious martyr-chief, is one of the grandest themes in ancient history. The merit of this piece, thought out for long years in retirement by a young woman (and, as a drama, overladen with thought and knowledge), is to seize the historical conditions with such reality and such truth, and to have kept so sustained a flight at a high level of heroic dignity. The interest lies in the conception of Hannibal's career and genius ; but the execution is far from inadequate. And there is true vigour and nobility in such scenes as the conference between Hannibal and Scipio, in the last scene in the senate of Carthage, and especially in the last farewell of Ada and Hannibal—which is essentially romantic rather than classical or dramatic.

In "Gemma of the Isles," in "The Lost Son," and in the unfinished dramas, we find the same tragic situations, the cruel alternatives of destiny, presented with an equal absorption in noble aspirations and in self-renunciation before the altar of Duty. There are musical lyrics, graceful fancies, and pathetic legends, scattered through them all. But the quality which I find most

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constant and most marked is an air of sustained fellowship with a company of imagined beings in an ideal world of larger mould and loftier souls. A true poet who is also a fine critic has called poetry the "criticism of life," and he has even gone on to say "that the strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry." The dominant and absorbing idea of Louisa Shore in poetry was to treat it as a school for the great problems of life—to hold on to the heroic, to the religious, in poetry—religious, be it said, in a human, not in a theological sense.

She reached her highest mark, I think, in the third and final part of the poem called *Elegies*, embodying her life-long memory of the sister and the brother lost in her earlier years. These noble verses have thought, passion, fancy, and music. I speak of the lines beginning—

Vain broken promise of unfinished lives !

and which end—

Forget not the Forgotten and Unknown.

These truly grand lines were inspired by the

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same thought that created the well-known poem of George Eliot which opens thus—

Oh ! may I join the choir invisible.

But the lines by L. on this splendid theme are, I hold, superior in force, in sincerity and fervour, and assuredly in rhythmical beauty. They recall also the fine lines on the same motive of Margaret Woods,

Praise to the unknown Dead !

All three poems have been, by permission, inserted in the hymn-book styled "The Service of Man," and they are frequently recited at Newton Hall, especially on the last day of the year, the day of all the Dead.

The three poems in the same tone which follow were first published in the little volume called "Elegies and Memorials," and contain some poetry of a very fine quality. I feel a special interest in the piece called "A Requiem," which turns on a pathetic scene I witnessed in a country churchyard, and had suggested to her as a subject. It would be very wrong to condemn as pessimism

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even such a mournful dirge as this, inasmuch as it ends with these inspiring words :

Pray for all souls that mourn their Dead,
Pray for all souls that they may see
A light from the great time to be
Already streak the East with red ;
Behind whose twilight wait unseen
A perfect earth, perfected man,
To finish all that we began,
To be what we would fain have been.

This indeed was her constant thought. Her most sombre visions ever saw the east streaked with red.

I have left myself small space to dwell on the poems and fragments now first published in this volume ; but they will answer for themselves. The unfinished dramas cannot but awaken regrets that they should remain fragments. It is evidently not that imagination was failing but that the author's own views of poetic perfection were in constant development. The scheme of " Pedro the Cruel " was a fine one—the struggles of a nature of generous instincts and violent temperament subdued by the love of a noble-

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hearted woman, but turned finally by uncontrolled power and a sense of early and repeated wrong to ambition and revenge. It would have been impressive to have traced step by step this change into the historic tyrant. What we have are some powerful scenes, worked out in stately verses, between Don Pedro and his beloved Maria, and between the brothers Fadrique and Henriquez.

The "Irene" displays better than any other piece the writer's intense worship of Nature, which in this poem she was pleased to people with a world of imaginary beings. The Nature worship she continued to the end; whilst the fairy visions which had been the fancy of her childhood, thus once recalled, died quite away and were succeeded, as we see in her later verses, by imaginings more human and concrete.

But the dramatic piece that will attract the chief interest is "Olga," which, though not complete, has its scheme and dénouement so worked out that its effect as a drama can be judged. It is, I think, the most original, and perhaps the most powerful, of her dramatic efforts. The plot, however startling in its incidents and tragic in its issues, is entirely within

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the range of practicable things, and is not as improbable as many nearly desperate deeds which have been committed and attempted in our own age. The concluding scenes are grandly conceived, and worked out with real tragic rapidity of action. Indeed, it is not saying too much to expect that they would furnish the basis of a powerful piece for the stage. It would require a Sarah Bernhardt to do justice to the conflict in Olga's soul of love, horror, heroism, and remorse.

Our memories charged with a sense of rare poetic endowment in one whom temperament and circumstances stunted in achievement during life, her friends, with whom I am permitted to join myself, stand round her grave ; and each of us must in silence recall those typical words of elegy over the "vain broken promise of unfinished lives :"

manibus date lilia plenis ;—
His saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani
Munere——

F. H.

PART I

EARLY POEMS



COLA DI RIENZI

(EXTRACT FROM A POEM SO NAMED)

A POET of the ancient day
He seemed, whose spirit-stirring lay
Might rouse the burning, bounding blood
Throughout as vast a multitude
As ever to the banners leapt
Of youthful Scipio, or through Rome
Held high the torch, whilst nobles slept,
To light their Tribune to his home.

Nor thought th' impassioned youth how he
Who tamed the Carthaginian pride
On Zama's field of victory,
A broken-hearted exile died ;
That Scipio yielded his proud spirit up
The hour when Hannibal drained off the poison cup.
That he who saved, and he who could not save
His country, slept in an unhonoured grave ;
Nor thought how erst the murdered Gracchi fell
Whose dying groans were Rome's last knell.

AT SEVENTEEN YEARS

OH Youth ! too nigh thine end thou'rt drawing
When thou art scarce begun ;
Oh Youth ! thou from my grasp art thawing
Like snow beneath the sun ;
Oh Youth ! of all thou'st promised me
Tell me what hast thou done ?

Jan. 1841.

MAN FLUTTERS IN THE CAGE OF DESTINY

MAN flutters in the cage of Destiny,
Beats on the wires and struggles to be free,
Lays frantic grasp upon the fleeting hours,
Upbraids with vain complaint supernal powers ;
Helpless and hopeless, angry as the waves
When tempests lash them into rock-girt caves ;
Vexed as the child reft of some darling toy,
Yet often, like the child, wooed back to joy
By some delusive dream whose colours glow
As bright, as falsely, as sun-tinted snow ;
Scorned by himself, and by the angels scorned ;
A being made to mourn and to be mourned.

Ah no ! though sorrow be their mortal lot,
There are who can endure and murmur not ;
There are who hallow uncomplaining years
With a perpetual flow of quiet tears,
Gaze on the captive fluttering in his cage,
The wind-swept billows tossing in their rage,
The fretful infant, with a smile and sigh,
And whisper " Till grief tamed me, such was I."

Dec. 1841.

SONNET—THE O'ERBURDENED
SOUL

WHERE art thou going, thou o'erburdened soul,
With that exceeding sorrow on thy brow ?
I know thee that thy spirit walketh now,
Clad like a mourner in his sable stole
With those old sins, whose thousand voices roll
Floods of reproach upon thee, until thou
Art fain to fling thyself to earth and bow
Beneath the shock thou seek'st not to control.
Oh, follow not that broken-hearted ghost
So far into the desert of Despair.
Not such the atonement to the dead thou ow'st,
For whose sake make the living souls thy care.
Go forth redeeming each past drop of *hers*
By scattering round thy path kind words to present
tears.

April 14, 1844.

DO NOT DISTURB THEM

Do not disturb them, that young gentle pair,
Brother and sister, in the stillness pacing
Down the deep lane—a shadowy greenness there
Of April hedgerows clouds the bank, effacing
That framework of light branches—through the
air

Light warblings wander ; everywhere displacing
The trophies of defeat, comes Spring retracing
Her last year's footsteps with a tender care.

Oh but the sorrow in those silent eyes
So soon to part to meet perhaps no more—
Thus at this spot, this hour, their childhood dies ;
Vowed to regret, the life that lies before
Will never, never present moments prize,
Save when they look like those that were of yore.

April 16.

THE RUINED HOUSE

THAT house that all in ruin lies,
'Twas there that I was born they say—
But since I was a child, mine eyes
Have never seen it till this day.

I have no memory of the place ;
Yet there they tell me, by yon wall,
Where weeds and stones choke all the space,
My sister oft has led the ball.

There, where in thickets all run wild,
Blush roses and ceringas stray,
When I was but a tiny child
She oft has watched me in my play.

Yon gleaming water, on whose brink
Wild flags their lonely vigil keep—
'Twas there that she would walk and think,
And sometimes too was seen to weep.

THE RUINED HOUSE

Howe'er it be, it gives me pain,
This garden waste, so wildly gay—
I will not visit it again
Though I ne'er saw it till this day.

1844.

THE PIRATE'S DREAM

THE drowned ! the drowned ! down in the sea
How thick they crowd my vessel's way.
The labouring keel moves heavily
Against the mass of heaving grey.
And everywhere, as on we go,
Starts up a face I seem to know.

But see, all round the horizon's verge
What crowds of dotted sails it shows—
Hull down, like ghosts they top the surge—
Saint Mary ! how their stature grows.
The hulls increase, the canvas spreads—
Now like tall ships they lift their heads.

Now for the chase—poor fools, they flee—
Was ever ship so swift as mine ?
Before, our thunder shakes the sea,
Behind us winds a foamy line,
That cuts the mighty main in two,
And with white silver streaks the blue.

THE PIRATE'S DREAM

How pale they look ! along the plank

See how unwillingly they go !

That captain's face, before he sank,

How black it was with rage and woe !

That fair-haired lad, who went the last,

What piteous looks on me he cast !

But will those shrieks be never still !

Will those drowned seamen never rest ?

Each billow swells into a hill,

With a wan visage for its crest.

They call the winds to drive us down—

What's this ? She sinks—I drown, I drown !

July 6, 1844.

SEA-VISIONS

THERE was a calm upon the Atlantic Sea ;
My ship lay rolling on its rolling swell,
And with its lurch the sails flapped heavily,
And then it was that a strange chance befell.

All round the horizon was a sunset glow,
A bank of many-coloured clouds and fair,
And as I watched them gradually grow,
Of a dim distant speck I was aware.

A something moved towards us o'er the ocean,
Where naught was but an azure blank before ;
And now we marked its undulating motion,
Now saw a form, and heard the plashing oar.

Closer it came and we beheld a man,
Whose face as one already dead was pale ;
With fixed, stern look he seemed the waves to scan,
Nor raised his forehead to our sudden hail.

SEA-VISIONS

Nor answered he, but down his oars he flung,
With hollow sound that smote the silent air,
Then from his bench, still sternly mute, he sprung,
And, scaling the tall shipside, joined us there.

“Bring wine; I thirst,” he said in low, deep tone;
And wine and food we bring, and round him crowd
To hear his tale; yet answer made he none—
As one enwapt, till “Oh!” he cried aloud—

“When a great ship goes down into the deep.
Who, who shall guess how many hearts on shore,
That once prayed for her, groan in agony
Over the precious load of lives she bore?”

“And when unknown her fate, but not unguest,
Her being is with the invisible,
Who shall portray the yearnings of the breast
That craves to know what none returns to tell?”

“‘She shall come back to me, or I will die!’
So wildly vowed I, as from morn till eve
I looked unto the sea with asking eyes,
And heart that would not in its loss believe.

“Such my last thought before my head was laid
Upon a pillow which could long bestow
No rest until, by watching overweighed,
A sleep came o’er me with its dreams of woe.

SEA-VISIONS

“It seemed as if a host of voices blended
 Into a roar of waters round my head,
As, living, into Ocean I descended,
 With frantic search to thread its crowds of dead.

“With conscious eye and ear at length I stood
 Upon firm ground—above me green and clear
I saw the pale light of the glistening flood,
 And its long funeral anthem still could hear.

“On either side behold, a vast arcade
 As ’twere of rock-hewn giants edged my way,
Pillars, whose arches circled with their shade
 Huge doors of adamant wave-worn and grey.

“In the strange ocean vault I stood amazed,
 And listened to a far-off cry of woe :
Affrighted on those dreadful doors I gazed,
 And what they covered feared, yet longed to know.

“‘Open!’ I cried, and forthwith as I spoke,
 All down the cloistered aisle, without a sound,
As if that desperate cry some spell had broke,
 The chain of each tall portal was unbound ;

“And each flew open, offering to reveal
 Its secret to the stranger ; but aghast
I paused, half wishing darkness might conceal
 The too stupendous mystery as I past.

SEA-VISIONS

“Heaven ! how my heart died in me thus to spy
In one brief glance the secret of the deep ;
I entered one, and there—Oh what saw I ?
A human corpse laid out as if in sleep.

“I turned and sought another—still the same,
A dreamless sleeper on his bed of stone ;
Unknown his history, unknown his name,
The date of his imprisonment unknown.

“And on and on I passed in haste and fear,
Searching each cave for one belovèd form ;
And on I passed, and cried ‘ She is not here !
Oh, thanks, brave ship ! thou hast escaped the
storm ! ’

“But there were creatures fair as even she—
Roses o’er whose sweet bloom the storm had swept
Whirling them down into the wild, waste sea ;
And, gazing on their loveliness, I wept.

“And there were children laid in childish sleep,
Each on its pillow with unconscious head,
Children for whom e’en yet their mothers weep,
And yet will not believe them of the dead.

“And there too the strong sailor with clenched hand,
As if upbraiding cruel ocean still,
That, baffling long despair’s wild strife for land,
Its tortured victim still delayed to kill.

SEA-VISIONS

“And some with wounds I stood aghast to view,
Like vanquished pirates in their wrath, lay there,
And some, like captains murdered by their crew,
Lay scowling in their impotent despair.

“Those whom the sea with holy rites received
Slept smiling as if dreaming of the shore,
As if in their fond fancy they believed
They yet might meet the friends they met no
more.

“So on and on I went, until my feet
Paused suddenly before a door still closed ;
It opened—fearing the dead glance to meet,
I looked—and there the well-known form reposed.

“Composed in look, as she had slept or years
In her lone burial vault, lay that sweet face.
She knew me not. Eternities of tears
Would not have washed her from her resting-place.

“I would have touched the pale, pale sleeper’s hand,
But something held me back, I knew not what ;
Recoiling, by the door I took my stand—
Heaven, sea, and land, all (save her face) forgot.

“I called her name. She heard not, but the voice
Of passion with its sudden agony,
Unbound my senses—round me roared the noise
Of waters and I started from the sea.

SEA-VISIONS

“ My dream was past, but not the abiding woe
That weighed upon my being. From the shore
I loosed my boat, with purpose fixed to go
There only whence I could return no more.

“ Now lies my body in its own sea-bed,
Divorced from which I walk the changeless sea,
Severed alike from living and from dead—
Stranger ! in yonder vaults they wait for thee.”

In blank amaze he left us ; but not long
In silence on each other might we gaze,
For dreadful portents now began to throng
In the black skies, and fear succeeded to amaze.

No man who saw it shall that storm forget—
Ocean ! thy wrath doth pass the wrath of men ;
And how I 'scaped thy hold I know not yet—
Keep my brave ship, wild foe ! I tempt thee not
again.

August 31, 1844.

This was almost the last of the poems that have remained in manuscript to which an exact date can be assigned.* The following poems, some of which are headed “Fragments from an

* Two sonnets excepted, written in 1855, which will be found at the close of this series.

SEA-VISIONS

Unwritten Novel," range between 1844 and 1849. Several of them were purely fictitious, others were thrown off in passing moods or youthful imaginative feeling. Her dramatising instincts, too, led her to give form and feature to every idea that crossed her ; while a taste for emotional poetry and for melancholy themes, as well as a want of belief in happiness in general, led her to an involuntary preference for depicting unrequited and despairing attachment.

Occasional verses, however, during this period were rare ; she was mostly occupied in working up her drama of "Hannibal," which was first sketched, as we have mentioned, at the age of twenty, and finished on the same plan some three years after, though it was revised and received its final form previous to publication in 1861.

A FAREWELL

THOU wilt not love me, then good-bye, good-bye !
The time will come when I shall feel this less ;

When I shall find a heart that will reply
More tenderly to this my tenderness.
Yet love like mine—which thine may never bless—

'Tis not in nature to feel twice ; to sigh
After its loss too long and bitterly
Were weakness—yet 'tis loss of happiness.

I may hereafter, I *shall* love anew,
But never, never as I now love thee ;
And I may wed, in heart remaining true.
And so, belovèd, I would wish to be.
I would not choose, if all might come again,
Not to have loved thee, though I loved in vain.*

* In the rough draft, this poem is headed by the words "To Adelaide."

LIKE TO A STATUE

LIKE to a statue, which though wanting breath,
Doth a fixed look of breathing passion wear,
E'en so her face, pale as the face of death,
Had yet a living sorrow graven there ;
And all the lines of it were lines of woe,
As if some cunning hand had carved them so.

More ghost than living from that death she rose,
Bearing upon her, for its outward seal,
Eternal paleness, inly charmed from woes
Which health and strength can fancy or can feel ;
Untouched by hope, by fear, by hate, by love,
She, spirit-like, through fire and flood could move.

Machine-like, her corporeal senses still
Performed their functions as she moved 'mongst
men ;
But that dead soul that swayed them once at will
Returned not to its living life again.

LIKE TO A STATUE

She never sighed, but sadder than all sighs
Were those unsmiling smiles that could not reach
the eyes.

Thus, of all purpose utterly bereaved,
She lived, scarce knowing that she lived, forlorn ;
With past and future for a blank she lived,
Wished not to die nor grieved that she was born.

FRAGMENT

LIFT thy head, despairing Creature !
 Passion's shipwrecked castaway ;
Reverently will pitying Nature
 Watch thy solitary way.

True, there's no one can restore thee,
 Out of Ocean's waste forlorn,
That one fairy bark that bore thee
 From the country of the morn.

Through the dark and dreadful waters
 Let the scattered fragments go ;
Passion pitilessly shatters
 Many as brave a vessel so.

True it is, the priceless treasures
 Of thine early hopes are lost ;
Many a golden freight as precious
 To the greedy gulf is tost.

FRAGMENT

True, the land whence thou art sundered
Was a land of lovely things ;
Round the paths where thou hast wandered
Many a happy wild bird sings.

Try another venture yet,
Other lands and other skies ;
Load a stronger ship with freight
Of a nobler merchandise.

And the eager toil and strife,
In the crowd of fellow-men,
To a glowing love of life
Shall brace up thy hopes again.

1844.

LIFE'S JEWELS

ONE after one, life's jewels I unbind—

Take one, take all! they have no worth for me.
Take from me every grace of heart and mind ;
Take youth, hope, fancy, love, and poesy.
So cast I my poor mite upon thy store—
Nothing to thee—but I have nothing more.

I cast in all, and the blind sculptured eyes
Of my mute idol, still so blindly cold,
Deem life's poor ashes a burnt sacrifice
Too wholly worthless even to behold—
Blind eyes, by not one human shadow crost
Through the dim incense of my holocaust.

My heart falls in its agony before thee,
Pale image, who will never hear my cry ;
With sacrilegious worship I adore thee ;
Oh God ! dost Thou behold that agony
Whose burning tears, had they to Thee been given,
Might buy a contrite heart the promise of Thy
heaven ?

LIFE'S JEWELS

My worthless being in profane despair,
 'Neath the slow-moving wheels I fling away ;
Pass on, pass on more quick ! I cannot bear
 This bitter lingering torment of delay.
Crush out my senses quick, unpitying wheels ;
My heart, though wholly powerless, still feels.

MY HEART PROSTRATE

My heart, prostrate with agony,
Lies so exhausted here,
It cannot sigh another sigh,
Nor weep another tear.

But all the same th' undying worm
Is busy with his prey,
Is busy with the hidden harm
That works unseen decay.

I perished long and long ago
In heart and soul and mind ;
The body, unsubdued, by woe
Is lingering still behind.

WE MET—AS FRIENDS ESTRANGED

WE met—oh God ! as friends estranged
Meet in a sad surprise ;
Not with hand-clasp, kind words exchanged,
But with our silent eyes.

As eyes that from opposing shores
Gaze o'er a waste of sea,
So o'er the crowd looked mine on yours
And saw you look on me.

And She was singing—yes, Her voice
Rang through that wondrous space ;
But oh the contrast all the while
With that mute, mournful face !

Oh eyes, to meet since that last night
No more through changing years—
Oh night all music and delight,
And heart all funeral tears !

A LAST AVOWAL

DEAR friend, although our youth is over,
E'en now it may your pity move
That you, who never were my lover,
I yet was wretch enough to love.

Yes, look me in the face, dear friend—
Hear calmly what I have to say ;
The long despair is at an end,
And yet this is a solemn day.

This is the day when first we met—
A dreamer I, like other girls ;
Oh need I ask if you forget
My rosy cheeks and shining curls ?

But you, you are almost the same
As when I gazed upon you then ;
I smile, and yet I blush with shame
To act my madness o'er again.

A LAST AVOWAL

And how recount the slow degrees
By which my life's sad passion grew,
Till every pleasure ceased to please,
Save one—to see and talk with you?

Oh God! my age grows young again,
Recalling that forgotten time,
And my heart struggles with the pain
That almost crushed it in its prime.

Dear friend, my secret now is told;
You listen with a grave surprise;
Why should I blush, now both are old,
To meet the wonder in those eyes?

SONNET—RESTORATION

OH Friend ! you knew me in those flowery days
When youth for its best ornaments doth wear
The shining graces of its eyes and hair,
And from the idle world that stops to gaze
Need fear no mischief save excess of praise.
And you with others just as young and fair,
Confounding me who then danced round you
there,
Pitied the shortness of those flowery days
Know then, dear Friend, the brilliant thing you
saw
In life's resplendent prime, was early dead ;
'The thing you look on now almost with awe,
The pale, cold creature whose sweet youth is fled,
With a new life feels all her heart beat fast—
For Hope, like Resurrection, comes at last.

THUNDER IN THE EAST

HARK ! Hark ! the thunder ! These are not the
few

Slow words in which our Summer speaks at last
All her imperial passion, which being past,
Her smile makes smooth the battle-field of blue !—
God's own great music which our childhood knew !
No ! Land and sea, now listening all aghast,
Whilst Death 'twixt camp and town roars by so
fast,

Ask Day and Night, "How long ?" *We* ask it too.
At home the first note of the nightingale,
And Beauty* curtseying to a people's cheer ;
Abroad the Brave thundering against the Brave ;
"How long ?" Till Europe bid her Freedom, Hail !
Then East and West in pardoning pride draw near,
And clasp stern hands above your children's grave.

April 24, 1855.

* The Empress Eugénie on her visit to the Crystal Palace.

AN EXHORTATION

OH Heart of England ! Set thyself on fire !

Not for the charge, not for the breach—to these
Thou hast rushed already—Not for ministries

By horror's side ; could Pity's self inspire

A fuller burst from all thy strings, great Lyre,

When she came weeping to thee o'er the seas ?

Anvil where strength beats out her prodigies,

Workshop of Thought—what more do I require ?

Brave, tender, strong and true ! Yet, England, rise
In greatness ! Know how much thou has to do.

Work faithful work, all you who seek the prize,
And you who deal, give faithful judgment too,

But, fail or win, let God's great task in life

Be dear to each as parent, child, and wife.

April 26, 1855.

PART II

POEMS ALREADY PUBLISHED

ELEGIES

I

Ἐτελεύτησε παρθένος . . . ἀπῆλθε δεῖνέα καὶ δέκατις.

Eustath. ad Il. B.

“She died a maiden . . . departing at nineteen.”

II

Νῦν δ' ἐκτὸς οἴκων, καπὶ γῆς ἄλλης φυγὰς

Κακῶς ἀπώλου, σῆς κασιγνήτης δίχα.

Soph. Electra.

“Now far from home, a fugitive in other lands, sadly hast
thou perished, severed from thy sister.”

Two jewels lost—Oh, long-divided pair !
Backward through time I turn to look for them,
And one I find beneath a cypress stem
Hid many a summer deep—the other, where ?
By time and space so far asunder tost,
That, in a dreamland early casketed,
This, in the after years so wildly lost—
Few miss them now, few count the long since dead.

ELEGIES

Two phantoms cross the ocean to my soul ;
One steals like moonlight o'er the darkening blue ;
One seems to sweep through stormshine to its goal,
Then wild with heartbreak flashes out of view.
But now, so dim with mist the sky and sea,
None cares to stand and watch for them with me ;
Yet tost by time and space so far apart,
Brother and Sister ! meet within my heart !

ERINNA died, a flame extinguished soon—
For flame she was, of such enchanted fire
As once soared upward on Arabia's noon,
When the last Phœnix vanished from the pyre.
But half a child through all her childish time,
Still half a child in girlhood's strenuous prime,
By Duty's bride-ring with such passion worn,
By Fancy's sparkling, flowery, fairy wand,
That wrought gave wonders in her firm young
hand—

By Nature's own sweet science at grey morn
Revealed, in wandering woodland-studies dear—
By these inspired, and ancient lore austere,
And the full heart that ever rushed to meet
The Fair and Good, and worship at their feet—
She lived on heights and knew not they were high,
On fire, and knew not other souls were cold ;
She would have learnt it all, but was to die

ELEGIES

Ere yet her eaglet-wings she could unfold
For her true mates to search the world, and ask
Her share in their appointed beauteous task.
Some task was waiting for her, so we deem,
Its hopes, its fears, its failures, all untried ;
But now her little lifetime seems a dream,
So long ago, and so unknown she died.
Now the red rose-leaf on the pure young cheek,
More childlike as time moves, and leaves her there,
And eyes which sprang up ere the lips could speak,
Melt into shadow through the drooping hair.
Now all that girlhood, now that flushed, intense,
Young fever, are a whisper of the night,
A faint sweet resurrection, a strange sense
Of absence unexplained till morning light.
And whilst her memory in its crystal urn
Gleams fair as silver through the dust of years,
Cold evermore where sky and ocean burn
With azure fire that isle of sepulchres,
'Twixt purple passion-flower and whitest rose,
Where Death a garden's summer queen appears,
She sleeps—but others live for other tears.

II

Ah, her young darling is not one of those !
His tale for her untold, its stormy close
Rent other hearts, but stirred not her repose ;

ELEGIES

Ungessed by her the strange and cheerless bed
Where rests, for ever rests, his weary head ;
And nothing of *their* haunted life she knows,
For whom an awful star, 'twixt wind and wave,
Still hovers o'er a merciless despair,
Still hovers o'er their treasure hidden there,
Their treasure in a never-fathomed grave—
Who dare not look, but feel the ghastly gleam,
While years of silence tell them 'tis no dream—
To whom across the world and waste of sea,
A mute sad Shadow turns its solemn gaze,
Hopeless of home—"Forget me not," It says :
"I am not lost, while Love remembers me."

Oh, faithful to the bidding of those eyes !
Oh, faithful to the tender heart of fire !
Love yearns for thee with unextinguished sighs,
But knows that with *her* death thy memory dies ;
And dies with it one sacred sole desire,
To gather up the scattered dust of death,
To charm the long-lost phantom back to light,
And that dear semblance to all time bequeath—
Vain bitter prayer for bitter sweet delight !
In what strange lines of beauty should I draw thee ?
In what sad purple dreamshine paint thee true ?
How should I make them see who never saw thee ?
How should I make them know who never knew ?

ELEGIES

Beauteous, mysterious, solitary boy,
Awakening slowly to the Poet's joy !
Fire-fountain of young genius, showering rays
Of ruby sparkle through thy dreariest days—
Heart in its hardy frame of manhood, ever
Kept fresh and dewy through the stony ways
And dust of toil, with all its vain endeavour—
Oh, pathos of the dreaming azure gaze,
Mute mirror of the wonders far away,
That once so witch'd with its unconscious blaze
The stranger-artist *—quenchless to this day,
Like stars burnt out in ages long gone by,
Whose phantoms still are splendid in the sky—
So all with thee, dear love, is dark and blind ;
With us, the smile, the flash, the glory, stay behind !

But words tell nothing—How tell half the rest ?
The fancy's quaint inventiveness of jest—
Wild, beautiful caprices of a speech
Now long unwritten, mute, and past from reach—
The rebel spirit's free-born questionings,
Past use and fashion, to the core of things—
But words tell nothing. Dim, how dim, alas !
My painting shows upon no magic glass.

* A French artist whom he once met in a Paris *salon* soon after his return from Australia, observed to his sister that "among all the strange birds he had seen there in the woods, there were none with eyes so bright as his."

ELEGIES

Ah, where to seek him ? Many a desert place
Of lovely wonders once had known him well,
And pilgrim fancy follows on his trace ;
But, when she seems to find his missing face,
And weeping prays him all his tale to tell—
No word she hears save, “Nevermore ! Farewell !”
Never the freezing forest,* which the grim
North-easter sets a-tremble with one sigh,
Through all its plummy pine-tops in the sky,
Then rends with crash and uproar limb from limb—
Shall shut again its cedarn gates on him,
Nor whisper age-long secrets any more
Around the daring, dreaming hermit’s door.
Oft the gold moon shall climb her midnight stair,
Above drear summits of the hemlock-tree—
With pale auroras decked, like streaming hair,
And from her chilly throne shall seek him there—
But her young lonely Poet, where is he ?
From his wild prison where the stealthy Death
Went whispering through the trees with poniard
 breath,
Down thy snow gallery, thou steel-bound river,
Long since that poet passed away for ever.

Ah, where to seek him ? For no longer now
In richer wilds and skied with fiercer blue,

* See “Two Months on the Tobique.”

ELEGIES

The beauteous frown of sleep upon his brow,
Dreaming he lies, deep in the dawn's chill dew ;
No more his flocks their desert pasture roam,
No more he toils, a miner in the wild ;
But ah ! for ever, evermore exiled,
For ever lost the solemn hope of home !
Brave, hardy wanderer, still through loss and pain
Athirst for beauty in earth, sky, and sea,
For thee no glaring prize, no vulgar gain
Was destined—but sweet Nature wedded thee ;
And caught thee up with her to heaven's third
height,
And things, by man unspeakable, she told—
Oh, what a soul was swept into the night !
Oh, what a heart in the cold deep lies cold !
What passion buried there its joy and pain !
Oh, sea and storm ! Oh, homeward bound in vain !
Oh, home bereft, what long expectant years
Closed with that darling life in hopeless tears !

III

Vain broken promise of unfinished lives !
From your untimely ashes what survives ?
Who shall fulfil your unlived half of life ?
Who win the crown of your unfoughten strife ?
Is your lost future like the dusky shade
The new moon carries in her golden boat ?

ELEGIES

Ah, no ; for in full royalty arrayed
The perfect orb through ether yet shall float ;
But neither light nor colour comes to thee,
Faint outline of a life that shall not be !
On that blank page, the student, Fancy, reads
The unwrit story of what should have been,
Sees, mournful paradox, the never seen,
And knows what was not. Yet the grief which
needs,
For life's support, a faith and not a dream,
Holds that the spirit in its sigh supreme
With sudden flame shall interpenetrate
Some form unearthly in some unknown state,
A beauteous mystery of meeting bliss
Reserving for the souls that weep and wait.
But vainly towards that state we strain from this ;
The earthly heart, the face, the self we miss,
'Tis that which *was* we fain would re-create.
We talk in earth's old language to our lost,
With our own sighs revivify its ghost ;
The form Love meets advancing through the
gloom,
Is but the reflex of her own desire,
Flashed on the glass, as in a darkening room
We meet ourselves.—Love once within the tomb,
Shall not that reflex of herself expire ?
Can any form our thought may fashion here

ELEGIES

Have life beyond this bounding atmosphere ?
Yet, long-lost sister ! can a soul like thine
Drop from the march of Nature's foremost line
So early, so unmissed ? Can all her pride
In that rich promise be so cast aside ?
Oh, long-lost brother ! Shall the myriad years
Make plain to Man this mystery of tears ?
Shall light come ever to this blind sad Earth
That knows not what is death nor what is birth ?
It will, but not to me. Earth yet shall know,
By a new light, the secret of her past,
Shall ask no more, " Why do I suffer so ? "
But smile in one great harmony at last.
And we, with faith in what we shall not see,
May call the dead whose tomb is in our heart,
To rise and take their own unconscious part
Of service in the glory that shall be.
For, could we link their memories to the chain
Of souls whose lights in long procession move
From Past to Future, so might yearning love
Behold their buried beauty live again,
To glide with solemn purifying glow
Along the endless way the ages go ;
Might joy o'er something added—casting in
Such jewels—to the world's great treasure heap ;
And here and there some living souls might win
To reverent fellowship with souls that sleep.

ELEGIES

Oh, perfect Race to be ! Oh, perfect Time !
Maturity of Earth's unhappy youth !
Race whose undazzled eyes shall see the truth,
Made wise by all the errors of your prime !
Oh, Bliss and Beauty of the ideal Day !
Forget not, when your march has reached its goal,
The rich and reckless waste of heart and soul
You left so far behind you on your way !
Forget not, Earth, when thou shalt stretch thy hands
In blessing o'er thy happy sons and daughters,
And lift in triumph thy maternal head,
Circling the sun with music from all lands,
In anthems like the noise of many waters—
Forget not, Earth, thy disappointed Dead !
Forget not, Earth, thy disinherited !
Forget not the forgotten ! Keep a strain
Of divine sorrow in sweet undertone
For all the dead who lived and died in vain !
Imperial Future, when in countless train
The generations lead thee to thy throne,
Forget not the Forgotten and Unknown !

THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

I

OF all the planets yearning—as they run
In magic round still ending, still begun—
To break the spell that holds them from the sun,
Does any guard the secret of all things?
Does some Star Emperor, other than the one
To which the lark sweet adoration sings,
Draw wiser worlds than ours around his throne?
Or must our hope still further stretch its wings
On to that Point of Mystery, unknown
Magnet of all the suns whose fiery cars
Whirl myriads after them of unimagined stars?

II

Or seek the Cause of Causes far behind,
The grave-clothes of a dateless past unwind,
Till nothing but an embryo's dust we find,
Which knew not what *we* know? Say, can we
reach,

THE MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

By footprints faint as these, the Master-mind ?
What though primeval atoms dumbly teach
The law of change, which, ere life yet began,
Gave form to formless matter,—can they preach
Of aught that's older than themselves to Man ?
Reveal a Presence greater than we see,
Greater than all we are and all we hope to be ?

III

Perchance, perchance at last, his toils and tears,
The long death-grapple of his hopes and fears,
And wisdom martyred all the countless years,—
Through deepening soul and heart's enlarged
 embrace,
And Duty owned sole star of worshippers,—
Shall this day's type of half-formed man efface
(What time the wrangling Oracles are dumb)
To set the crown of Godhead on our race,
And work the nobler miracles to come.
In vain for ages long we seek a sign
Of any God on earth, till Man becomes divine.

LAMENTATIONS

I

OH, that my head were waters,
And fountains were mine eyes,
For all thy sons and daughters,
Thou world of sins and sighs !
Oh, that my heart might speak before it breaks and
dies !

Through Youth, through Age, through each
Dead Conscience in its turn,
Wisdom that will not teach,
Folly that will not learn,
Through man and woman, too, my words should
pierce and burn.

Alas for Youth ! because
The heart of Youth is old ;
It thrills not for a cause,
But, arrogantly cold,
Turns from the fiery summons as a tale twice told.

LAMENTATIONS

The holy dangerous ray
It shuns, to join the press
That throngs the gaslit way
Of bare and hard success,
And sinks at last, unmissed, to night and nothingness.

Oh, thou that wouldst not soar,
Methinks 'twere nobler done
To rise, as rose of yore
Resplendent Phaethon,
And fall—but fall, like him, a rival of the sun !

And if I sigh for Age
Because it is too late,
Because it has grown sage,
But cannot mend its fate,
And knows not what Life is till Death is at the
gate,

Still more for Age I mourn
Because it is afraid,
With all its vows forsworn,
The world's great cause to aid,
And thinks man will not change, but be as he was
made.

And Love—man's doom and jest—
What hast thou here to do ?

LAMENTATIONS

In such disguises dressed,
We know not false from true ;
We trust the world to thee, and thou betray'st it too.

Love frivolous and vain,
Love coldly overwise,
Love sensual and profane,
And worshipper of lies—
Traitor, depart from us ! True love, awake, arise !

II

For Woman most my tears
Should set Man's heart on fire,
Whose love and threats and jeers
Have made of her a liar,
That paints her very soul, to win the world's desire.

Oh, Earth ! Earth ! Mother Earth !
Rise, call upon thy son !—
“I bare twain at a birth,
And thee, the stronger one—
With her I gave to thee, tell me what hast thou
done ?

“When, fresh from Nature's arms,
She first clasped hands with thee,

LAMENTATIONS

Her noble infant charms
Announced a queen to be,
Wise, beautiful, and pure, and brave as are the free.

“Thou madst this queen thy slave,
In falsehood, fear, and shame ;
The best her mother gave
Was counted her for blame,
And Fame suborned to make a byword of her
name.

“Reared up to toil by blows,
Her childhood pined in fears,
Until, at last, a rose
Of beauty, as the years
Went forward, smiled upon the cruel world through
tears.

“Then, crowned and chained and scorned,
When first her head she raised,
A strange new lustre warned
Her master, as he gazed,
That in her eyes a spirit waked and watched,
amazed ;

“Against its bars to beat,
With plumage blood-besprent,

LAMENTATIONS

Then flutter to his feet,
A guiltless penitent,
And kneel to him for pardon, praise, and punishment.

“Rebellious and reviled,
Or crouching and caressed,
A goddess or a child,
But still a slave confessed,
Caged in the jealous East, toy-sceptred in the West ;

“Alike the tale hath been
To-day and long of yore ;
The dazzling Eastern queen,
Bending her lord before,
With rubies all a-tremble, and forehead to the floor,

“Still mirrors in old story
My nobler daughter, taught
To bow down all her glory
Of free-born will and thought
Before a spectral terror, conjured out of naught.

“Thou claim'st to be her god,
To rule her inmost shrine

LAMENTATIONS

Of conscience with thy rod ;
Thy mockery is her sign
From Heaven that she hath sinned—against thy laws
divine.

“ But what of HER that fell
To shameless shame for thee ?
Hark ! from that hidden Hell
Her cry has risen to me,—
How long, oh deaf and blind, how long shall these
things be ?

“ Her soul, that sobs away,
Still, still a wasted breath,
Her heart, that day by day
Bleeds bitterly to death,
While writhing that gay mask of dauntless sin
beneath.

“ No more, no more for HER
Let Earth cry out in vain ;
My depths are all astir,
And every pulse is pain,—
Rise up, a nobler Brother, loose thy Sister's chain !”

A REQUIEM

*On reading some verses about a poor woman seen carrying the
coffin of her infant in her arms to the burial.*

So too, dead darlings of the past
By disappointed souls are borne
Beneath a sky not less forlorn,
Across as desolate a waste.

To no triumphant requiem,
Some love or faith or fancy-crown
Of genius we at last lay down,
And in deep silence bury them.

Perhaps for years we watched them die,
Perhaps they died before we knew ;
Perhaps a violet or two
May yet spring up from where they lie.

Ah ! some have laid their dead in earth
Where gardens redden o'er with bloom,
To flower from many a magic tomb
Into some new and lovelier birth.

A REQUIEM

There the first passion of the boy,
Buried with all its beauteous folly,
Sublimes to true love's melancholy,
Or true love's vivifying joy.

There rise the nobler dreams of youth,
From childhood's fancies cast aside ;
Beliefs that had their day and died
Grow thence to grander forms of truth.

But they who drop by slow degrees,
Gifted in vain, the best they have
Deep in a cold and barren grave—
What shall we say to comfort these ?

That happier selves shall gather flowers
From hopes *we* sowed in ground that seemed
So barren?—fairy tales *we* dreamed
Be true of other lives than ours ?

That poems and that pictures, pent
Once in *our* souls, shall yet escape,
And in some new transcendent shape
Attain their full accomplishment ?

Pray for all souls that mourn their dead—
Pray for all souls that they may see

A REQUIEM

A light from the great time to be
Already streak the East with red ;

Behind whose twilight wait unseen
A perfect earth, perfected man,
To finish all that we began,
To be what we would fain have been.

PART III

UNFINISHED DRAMAS AND
OTHER PIECES

UNFINISHED DRAMAS AND OTHER PIECES

THE following fragments, consisting chiefly of scenes of dramas, were, for the most part, the work, very irregularly pursued, of some fifteen years, up to the last seven before her end. Interested as she was in the occupation, she wanted perseverance, self-appreciation, and latterly health and strength, to complete her designs.

The sister had always been aware of the planning of these dramas, about which Louisa freely conversed with her as long as they were only plans. But when they had been put to paper, nothing more was heard of them. If she sometimes prayed to be shown some of this work, the writer only carelessly answered, "I will, some day." She never gave her sister an idea that there was anything but a few scraps and mere failures, of which nothing could be made.

UNFINISHED DRAMAS AND OTHER PIECES

The latter was consequently astonished when, during her sister's last illness and after her death, she discovered these various compositions in different places and in the least promising forms, carelessly left unnoticed on bedroom shelves, or buried deep in long unopened cabinet drawers. The verses were scrawled with pen or pencil in most irregular fashion, often on blank leaves of tradesmen's account-books, on scraps of old letters and memoranda, the pencil notes sometimes almost effaced, and the handwriting not rarely all but illegible. They were covered, moreover, with hundreds of female fancy heads, sometimes very beautiful, which she had through life an irresistible propensity to draw whenever she had pen or pencil in her hand. And in this state were found pages on pages of fine and finished verse, continually corrected and re-copied and showing great care in the composition, though in other parts lines were often unfinished and the final touches obviously not given.

These fragments are, nevertheless, if one may say so, as poems mostly complete in themselves, and may be read without a sense of imperfection. This is especially the case with the one which

UNFINISHED DRAMAS AND OTHER PIECES

we have called "Olga," which has a commencement and a conclusion, with an unbroken interest, and which we give first, on that account. In point of fact, it was nearly the last written and quite the last discovered; her sister had supposed that all had been found and had no notion of the existence of the MS. till she came upon it at the bottom of a drawer turned out merely to clear it of rubbish. It was mixed and crossed with verses on other subjects, and overlaid, as usual, with a crowd of delicate, mysterious girl-faces.

The date is fixed by the subject as 1881.* She had been deeply impressed with the state of Russia, the terrible moral results of unlimited power to the ruler, the tragic struggles of the Nihilists, and the murder of the Czar. But she laid the work aside, because the imaginary situation, to which no precise period was assigned, obviously suggested a contemporary event too tragical for use as mere literary capital, and thus hurt alike her artistic and her human sensibilities.

* The assassination of Alexander II. of Russia took place March 13, 1881.

OLGA

SCENE I

DIMITRI *and* OLGA *his pupil*

DIM. Now, Olga, I have led thee round the world,
From North to South, from East to West, and then
Back through the ages, past th' extremest bound
Of history—step by step have tracked the race
Of man to his mysterious gradual birth
Out of the ruder life—aye, further still,
Through the half-made wild world of desolate flood,
And forest and perpetual dream-change up
To the dumb, formless matter wherein first
Unconscious life lay cradled. We have stood
Together and surveyed as from a height
The gathering swarms stream o'er the waste of
earth,
Scatter and spread, re-form, hunt, fight, hew down
The forests, build, found cities (clustered lights
Starring the darkness of the Asian plain,

OLGA

Some vanishing to shine again no more) ;
Then, tending downwards, we have passed together
From throne to throne, temple to temple, down
To this strange, restless, miserable time.
Thou hast heard the endless chorus of men's sighs
Roll by us like the murmur of the sea,
Then, as the present age loomed into sight,
Nearer and nearer swelling into groans,
And shrieks, and curses, whilst above them all
Triumphant music soared into the skies,
From modern Neros singing to the flames
Of human hearths—and hearts.

Thou hast seen how Kings,
Like Mammoths of the past, survivals grim
Of the world's childhood, prey upon it still ;
Hast seen the priests still offering at the shrine
Of God framed in the tyrant's image, not
(What once was savoury to their Deity)
The sacrifice of human flesh and blood,
But man's more sacred soul ; thou hast seen the
strong
Stamping the weak to dust, hast seen the wise
Frame laws to snare the simple, wealth rob the
poor,
Bribe innocence to sin ; and thou hast heard
The grave voice of devout hypocrisy
In Bible phrase inform us " It is good."

OLGA

Thou hast seen the poor man, blindly, desperately,
Feeling for God, a God of peace and love,
And seen the rich and mighty grudge him this,
His one possession, his one dream of hope,
And smother in dark sayings his new faith ;
Enthroned another God in vulgar pomp,
And bribe Him with base homage
To fix His seal on deeds of blood and crime,
To set His foot on knowledge and denounce
With curses that faint dawned of the light.
Thou hast learnt much, but knowledge for the sake
Of knowing merely is a luxury
Too delicately selfish for the soul
To thrive by. Thou has *felt* much too, hast burned
In thy grave silence over this world's wrongs.
But the heart wastes, not lives, in such slow fire
As thine keeps pent within it. What my words
Mean on this day, on other days have meant,
I think you have in part divined.

OLGA.

In part—

I wait for more.

DIM.

Then listen to me now.

The time is come for us who know, to teach
The weak who feel, to teach them how the weak
Find strength in secret union, and must pass
Laws holier than the tyrant's and the priest's,
The busy money-getter's and the rich

OLGA

Voluptuary's—that in this secret court
These must be judged and sentenced, ere they know,
By just inexorable judges—Yes—
'Tis war, and we must strike.

OLGA. Strike ? . . . whom ? and how ?

DIM. Child, are the little daily innocent pleasures
That flutter round thee like spring-butterflies,
As thy youth blooms more fully from the bud,
Enough for thee as (for) others ? Morn by morn
To rise and meet thy beauty in the glass
While thy deft handmaid smooths thy raiment out,
To choose rich hangings for thy sumptuous nest,
And pictures to salute thy waking eyes ;
To crown vase after vase with miracles
Of bloom—those nurslings of such warmth and light
As never bless the cradles of the poor ;
Then to choose silks and laces for the ball,
And wait the crowd of sauntering worshippers,
Murmuring their brainless nothings round thy chair ;
And last accept some rich, luxurious lord
To be the life-long master of thine hours,
With half a heart for thee, and scarce a thought—
More gravely trifling in thy married chain
Than in thy days of dancing vacancy—
But trifling still, though crowned with motherhood,
A harmless and a graceful happiness,
Midst all the finer courtesies of home,

OLGA

(The rich have time for courtesy, if not
For love) will this content you ?

OLGA. In my heart
I have renounced all this, because to me
All joys seem stolen from the joyless.

DIM. Well
I knew your answer. You would freely give
Life's pleasures—would you give your life itself
To help the helpless?

OLGA. Yes.

DIM. I knew that too.
But more than that—could you give up this life,
All this young blooming life and hope, amidst
The hisses and the howlings of the world—
That which each calls the world—the neighbour-
names,
The long-known friends—the rival and the lover?
Could you endure to see them stand aloof
In scorn, yes, e'en the kind with wondering horror,
The men who once would reverently have knelt
To kiss your feet, hereafter to deny
The very knowledge of your face and name ;
And thus rejected, even by your kin,
You should become upon the wingèd sheets
That light on every threshold in all lands,
A name of portent to all curious eyes
That feed upon disasters—they themselves

OLGA

Safe sheltered from the storm—could you bear this,
Content that humble thousands whom you knew
not,

Some future day, unheard by you, should rise
And call you blessed ?

OLGA. If I could believe
That I should merit this, I would—I think,
I am sure—bear all the rest.

DIM. But more, much more—
Say, would you sacrifice your very soul,
Its gracious womanliness, its limpid truth,
Its tender pitifulness, its pure pride,
Its sacred "Touch me not," that delicate shrine
Of crystal which invisibly divides you
From the coarse, common world? Could you be false?
Flatter bad men? be cruel? fling aside
The selfish pedantry of cautious conscience
In pity to the groans of humankind?
Say, Olga, would you do this?

OLGA. Let me think
What your words mean.

DIM. You shall know all in time.
Have trust in us, and when the hour shall strike
Be crowned the true Saint of a loftier Faith
Than martyrs died for in the flames of old.
They died to save their single souls ; they bore
Torments on earth to purchase endless Heaven.

OLGA

You shall obtain more glorious martyrdom—
Give your own soul to serve the countless souls
Who in the days to come shall bless the Few—
For we are few as yet—we are the First.
Thousands will join us till the world is won.
Will you be of the First?

[illegible]

DIM. Mere words.

To answer them I will but bid you stand
Outside yourself. Look at the beautiful soul
Within you revelling so delicately
In its own perfectness, not seeking praise,
But self-assured, in self-approval proud,—
And useless to your fellows. Look on it,
As I portray it—not as *you*, but *yours*.
Then think you hear a voice inspired, the voice
Of all humanity that calls on you
To fling a stone at that bright rainbow-thing
You treasure—that fair vision of yourself—
And shatter it to fragments.

OLGA. I am nothing,
Unless I can do service to the cause ;
And what I can I will do. Only tell me
What, what shall be that service ?

DIM. You shall know it
When the time comes.

OLGA

OLGA. So I may be assured
That, using thus the weapons of the wicked,
We shall not take their place—become as they are.

DIM. No, by my soul ! The enemy *we* fight
Is false and cruel in his own behalf ;
For power, for lands, for wasteful luxury,
For all the haughty privilege of the few
To suck the life-blood of the many, enjoy
While others weep, idle while others toil ;
To speak, to walk, like Agag, delicately,
While humble Labour heavily plods by—
To keep the key of knowledge and to close
Its doors on starving ignorance, then doze o'er
The page of genius in an easy-chair—
For Self alone our masters sell their souls ;
And we—we give them for humanity.

Enter COUNTESS ANASTASIA, OLGA's mother

COUNTESS. Pardon for breaking in upon your studies.

I need my daughter for a pressing business.

DIM. Countess, her task is finished.

COUNT. And I hope
Well learned. I trust you have a docile pupil.

DIM. None more responsive to a word, or swifter
To follow out my thought.

OLGA

COUNT. I am glad you say so.
Yet now a time draws near that scarce will leave
her
Leisure for these slow tranquil hours with you,
Which I rejoice to know employed so well.
Come then, my child, 'tis your new dress awaits
you.
Wise as you are, Dimitri, you'll not grudge her
The coming triumph of her youth to-night,
When she will dawn in beauty on a world
That yet scarce knows her face. . . .

SCENE II

OLGA'S FIRST BALL

The COUNTESS, &c. *A knot of* YOUNG MEN STUDENTS
in a corner. DIMITRI, IVAN, &c.

IVAN. What will you make, then, of this pretty
toy?
What secret have you puzzled out beneath
That low, mysterious brow, and those twin curves
Of faintly gleaming hair? What see you there
Save purple-born young beauty, in serene
Expectance of her crown to come? Aye, tell me
What see you in this child that you should cast
Our life, hope, cause into her baby hands?

OLGA

DIM. I see the virgin-saint of the new faith
And all the miracle of the new time—
Young awful justice in a lovelier mask
Than Folly ever wore. What more? I see
The dagger glittering at the tyrant's heart.

IVAN. If you see true, so be it ; and in Heaven's
name

Snatch up this delicate flower from its gay vase
And let it scorch and blacken in the flames.
We are sworn to sacrifice not ourselves only,
But, if need be, the best and fairest too.
But what you see I see not. I see love
And idle marriage, serious folly—all
The little countless treasons of vain youth
To the best and highest ; all a nation's hope,
A world's hope it may be, cast lightly by
For a night's triumph in a new-made dress,
For a fool's whisper, homage of a flower,
Or say—a smile from the August himself.
. . . . And truly we may boast that Cherub lips
Shall pipe our march to the Infernal gods.
For where else are we bound when we recruit
Our sacred band in ball-rooms and entrust
Our secret to the ears of waxen dolls ?

OLGA

SCENE III

A SLEDGING PARTY

The COUNTESS, OLGA, &c., *and the same* YOUNG MEN
who were at the ball, and other STUDENTS and
CONSPIRATORS

COUNTESS. [*To* ILMA, *a lady companion.*]
Where is she gone on those wild wings of hers?
Couldst thou not stay her?

ILMA. Lady, no; my bird,
When I would catch her, flits beyond my reach,
And sings defiance.

COUNT. Oh these daughters! Where
Is she now, Ilma?

ILMA. Where her laughter rings
Against the jingle of the sleighing bells,
Driving her frantic steeds beneath the stars,
Chased by a crowd of lovers wild as she.

COUNT. As reckless and as heartless—is she mine,
This strange young daughter? such a soft sweet
rose

Of love and goodness till this fatal time.

[*OLGA is introduced on this occasion to the body of*
CONSPIRATORS *by* DIMITRI, *to whom she has given*
her final assent

OLGA

OLGA. I trust you, and will follow you for ever.

DIM. Then I will bring you to the brotherhood,

Whose watchword is—while tyrants live and reign—

“Death to the tyrant and his tyranny.”

IVAN.

Fair Olga,

Believe him not, he makes a jest of you.

We are not here for such grave purposes—

Dimitri never makes a jest of *me*.

OLGA. For what, then, are you met?

IVAN.

To try the speed

And courage of our horses—’tis for us

As grave a matter as for you, fair dames,

Your rivalry in dress. These jangling bells

Are our dance music, and this frozen flood

Our ball-room.

DIM.

Cease, you will not cheat her so.

*

*

*

*

*

A brave and devoted young conspirator has been condemned to death. The brotherhood has had an anonymous letter conveyed to the Czar’s hands setting forth the advantage of showing mercy to the youth, but in vain. A second time they write, threatening vengeance. This step is answered by his immediate execution. The next scene is a masked ball. To

OLGA

this Olga, still under the fascination of the new fellowship, and in the indignation excited by the Czar's last act, goes masked.

SCENE

THE PALACE AND THE BALL

CZAR, OLGA, *Others*

OLGA. Sweet Czar, I fain would have a word with thee.

Give me thy hand.

CZAR. 'Tis thine. Thou tremblest.

OLGA. Oh!

For five long years I have sighed for such a moment.

And yet I knew, I knew, through all those years, That I should stand, as now, thy hand in mine.

CZAR. Speakest thou of years? And yet I know thee young

By the clear thrill of that fresh voice, and fair I guess thee by thy grace.

OLGA. When first thine image Began to haunt me, Mighty Czar, I had But fifteen years.

CZAR. And hast thou loved me, then, From fifteen years?

OLGA

OLGA. Love! that's a feeble word,
One that means nothing. I have watched thy
footsteps ;

In dreams, in waking, I have lived for thee,
In every book have only read thy name,
In music heard thee only—at the altar
Have worshipped for thy sake.

CZAR. Thy words are fire.
They may be true. Yet many a word of Love
From my youth up has echoed in my ear,
And never aught but false ones. They were
sweet,
E'en when I knew them flatteries—our foily
So craves for shows of love—until I knew
That they were treachery too. That pained me
once ;
But now they pass me like the idle breeze.
I heed them not.

OLGA. What, none ?

CZAR. Yes, when a voice
Like thine breathes such sweet, passionate utterance,
It is to me as music.

OLGA. Are you happy ?

Czar. Happy ? that is a word sovereigns like me
Have naught to do with. There is happiness,
Sometimes—I am told—in simple, humble lives—
No pride, no power—but that is not for me.

OLGA

OLGA. Yours is a height where flowers perchance
bloom not ;

But there are grander things, austerer joys.
To hold the lives of millions in your hands,
To choose them out as God does ; with a scratch
Of yonder pen-point, doom whome'er you will
To death or dungeon—or exalt to honour—
That's to be like a god.

CZAR.

Yes, if a god

Could live for ever on the crater's brink,
Expecting the infernal blaze of doom,
The crash, the thunder, and the sea of fire.
But that were naught. Say rather if a god
Knew never friend from foe, distrusted oft
The truest, blindly in the false believed—
What say I ? truest ? are there any true ?
The fond, the innocently smiling eyes
That melt at a hard word to a sad dew
They fain would hide, the lips that shyly kiss,
The rose-blush of the half-averted cheek,
Love's timid murmur—and again the brave,
Blunt speech, too honest for the courtier's trade.—
Do not they both betray ? Have I not lost
The common instinct to judge friend from foe ?
An angel's voice from heaven that warranted
The faith of nearest and of dearest, still
Would leave me doubting. E'en thyself, sweet mask,

OLGA

Whose voice has the fresh, birdlike song of youth,
The very ring of perfect innocence,
How know I thou'rt not plotting for my death ?
Nay, tremble not—I did but speak in jest.

OLGA. Czar ! if the good thus suffer who but live
To make their people happy, what must be
The torments of the tyrant ?

CZAR. If I were
The tyrant that they think me, I could scarce
Live lonelier.

OLGA. Ah, were death then preferable ?

CZAR. No, for I live to play my royal part.
Were I a coward, I might choose to die ;
But I am chained by honour to my post.

OLGA. There have been tyrants, surely, have there
not,
Hated by all mankind and damned by God ?
In old times, if not now ?

CZAR. God knows their hearts.
We'll speak not of them. Rather let us speak
Of thee, whose voice so moves me, yet whose face
I see not, thee whose hand I hold in mine,
Yet do not know thy name. Unmask, my child ;
Tell thy Czar who thou art.

OLGA. Stay. I am one,
Rash Czar, in whom the world believes and trembles.

CZAR. Strange words ! once more, who art thou ?

OLGA

OLGA. [*unmasking.*] I am Death.

CZAR. Oh take another name! Is Death so beautiful?

[*A hand is stretched over OLGA's shoulder and stabs the CZAR to the heart*

LAST SCENE

Another apartment.—IVAN (the assassin) and OLGA, guarded. IVAN, fettered. OLGA, on a couch insensible

IVAN. [*Watching OLGA.*] She fell thus in a swoon
and lay as dead,

Soon as the blow was dealt.

GUARD. She's coming to.

OLGA. [*Reviving.*] Where am I? what am I? and
who are you?

IVAN. You are in the palace where your task was
done,

You are a martyr-saint, the crown of women—
I your poor comrade—but that name of honour
Is as a halo, in whose light I go
Right proudly to the scaffold.

OLGA. I go too?

IVAN. Perchance they'll pardon all that loveliness.

OLGA. I am perplexed—I know myself no more.

OLGA

Am I a girl or devil ? Have I done
A glorious deed, or an accursed one ?

IVAN. I have told you—you were just a pretty girl,
Till our cause turned you to a heroine.
And, if your youthful graces save you not,
You go all dressed in splendid innocence
To that last scene that fixes you, a star,
To shine through all the ages. Though you struck
not

Th' immortal stroke, the glory is your own.

OLGA. But I must tell you something that you
know not,

That I myself knew not until that moment.
I loved him.

IVAN. All the nobler was your deed.

OLGA. I love him still, and I shall die of it.

IVAN. Nay, die for something better—keep your
last

Heart-beat for that brave brotherhood who dared,
And did, and suffer with us. We are together
In one same skiff, bound to the shores of Styx.
Think too of poor Dimitri—he's no tyrant.

OLGA. For five long years the Czar was my girl's
dream,

My fancy's idol, till Dimitri kindled
Another flame—not love but hatred—oh,
What have you all done to me, you, so strangely

OLGA

Hardening my heart ? But when *he* spoke to me
So sadly, nobly, all my brain was turning
With the intense love that sprang up in me.
And still I lured him—still I played my part ;
And when I gave the signal, I believed
I was the God-appointed Priestess, he
God's chosen sacrifice, a noble victim
Slain at the altar of Humanity.
And I fell prostrate, giving up myself
In the same sacred holocaust—ah me !
The flames are raging—raging, and I burn.
And he is there, so sad and beautiful,
And now—oh God ! he dooms me !

GUARD.

She is raving.

She must be moved hence.

IVAN.

She is dying—look.

OLGA. Alexis ! hold my hand again in thine.

[*Dies.*

IRENE'S DREAM

THE following poem, whose purpose, in what has been left of it, is not very distinctly developed, is the story of a shadowy being, called Irene, combining attributes of Emily the sister who died many years before, of the writer's own self, and of her fairyland fancies. The first eighteen lines were intended as a portraiture of that sister and were afterwards wrought with some variations into the "Elegies," where Emily is more fully depicted under the name of Erinna.

I—IRENE.

IRENE died,—a flame extinguished soon—
And flame she was, so fervent and so pure,
In childhood never more than half a child,
The grave young genius of the garden ground,
And all its lesser life of birds and flowers—
Still half a child in girlhood's eager prime ;

IRENE'S DREAM

Like some bright stranger from a nobler star
Bewildered by the littleness of this.
So—unlike others, though she knew it not,
She lived on heights and knew not they were
high—

Apart and knew not that she lived alone.—
The height, th' unlikeness, and the loneliness
She would have known them all, but was to die
Ere she had sent her soul abroad to choose
Its own true mates out of the crowded world
And work out its own beautiful task on earth.
Some task was waiting for her—so we deem,
Its hopes, its fears, and failures all untried.
But a cloud came, no darker than a dream,
And of a phantom of the mind she died.

One morn she looked and spoke as through a veil,
Her looks and voice, so delicately bright,
Now muffled in a cold and dreary change,
Yet could not tender questioning prevail
To learn what meant her mind's distemper strange.
But as days passed she half shook off the dream,
And now on the familiar ivory keys
Would ponderingly a faltering music play
As if recalling some unwritten theme,
Murmuring the while sweet words they scarce could
catch,
Ranged in so quaint a sequence that they yearned

IRENE'S DREAM

But once to hear the hinted music soar
On the full volume of her voice, but once
To revel in the perfect pleasure ; yet
Still would she pause—then listen—rebegin,
And always one sweet burden would melt in,
Which, later, baffled yearning memory's search—
Oft caught and lost as by some slippery spell,
To make a want for ever in their souls,
When the belov'd musician was no more.
They asked her what her song meant—rapt awhile
She heard them not, then woke with half a smile ;
Yet answered gravely, "'Tis the Fairies' Song.
You must all listen and remember it."
Yet was it lost at last.

Oft too she writ,
A spot of crimson kindling on each cheek,
Her eyes aflash with fever ; but with care
Would hide the written page if they drew nigher
Or, questioned, with the petulant, bashful ire
Of youthful genius, or perchance the haste
Of one who dreads a too short hour to waste,
Made hurried answer, and bent down again.
They watched her, grieving, but she spoke at last
In her own studious sanctuary of art
All coloured and pervaded with herself
(As still it is—bright relics set apart,
And all her books untouched upon the shelf).

IRENE'S DREAM

To one child sister listening reverently,
In words but vaguely understood she told,
With sweetly serious voice and lustrous eye,
All of her secret language could unfold.
“I pine away for ever for a dream,
A something found at night, by daylight lost,
So changing parts with life, its visions seem
The substance, and this waking world the ghost.
I love you all, and wonder what I do—
Thus strangely yearning for what is not you,
But yearning always. In my dream, my home
Rose up, a marble, white old Roman hall,
All echoing space, and sunlight, and the land,
It seemed, was Britain, Britain of old days,
Or such it grew upon my memory.
When I awoke—a square of waving grass,
Rich in the green luxuriance of its prime,
Blue with the dewy shine of hyacinths,
On three sides bowered with chestnut avenues,
Fronted the lovely mansion. I lived there,
Closed in from war and danger, friend and foe,
By guardian fairies who made everywhere
A wild small music, like to tinkling laughter ;
And airy talks and rustlings followed after,
Amongst the rustling foliage, to and fro.

That calls back

A day of girlhood. Once, the first of June—

IRENE'S DREAM

Do you remember ?—you were all away,
And I, that lovely golden afternoon
Was lured, I know not by what spell, to stray
On, on to that forlorn, forbidden gate,
My childhood's earliest dream of hopeless wonder ;
And then, for the first time, some unseen Fate,
Soon as I touched them, split its leaves asunder.
And in its mystery, mute and melancholy,
I saw the lovely, desolate domain,
The spell-bound, fire-wrecked walls of Fairy's Folly.
That garden—Oh I cannot make it plain,
The solemn slumber, the forgotten grace,
The lovely lornness of that sweet dead place,
Where blush-rose thickets and ceringa flowers
Still careless strayed o'er the deserted ground,
And violets white and blue crept through the
 bowers,
And butterflies amongst the brambles round
Found out gay blossoms in their leaves enshrined,
And old faint memories rose upon my mind—
A violet legend on an ancient mound,
Where only now that summer dream I found.
I cannot make it plain, that wonder world
Of glory. Vaguely I remember now
A day of mystery in my childhood spent,
Far off from here, in wandering at my will
Round a deserted, beautiful domain

IRENE'S DREAM

And desolate ruined mansion which still stood
To witness through the ages that man once
Had pleasure in the spot. Still on my sense
Flashes the dreamy silver of that lake
Which, as it lay neglected in its reeds,
Mirrored with careless truth the blue, blue sky
And rosy fancies of the setting sun,
For my unshared delight.

Assuredly
That sweet, dead place was brought to life again
In my lost dream—a marble Roman hall
That seemed the growth of scarce historic times
Rose up complete. Yet English was the land,
English the garden. There I lived alone,
Familiar with the creatures of the place,
Wild squirrels, birds and insects, leaf and flower ;
And for all human friends a silent pair,
The ancient surly woodman and his wife,
Who in their ivied cot much rather seemed
The natural growth of those forgotten shades
Than servants and companions of my home.
You were too young ;* but I remember well

* It is evident that Irene is here narrating her recent dream, though in this picture of the old couple she describes the figures she had really known in her childhood in that day's visit, or, as other passages would imply, that residence of some duration in the old hall called the Fairies' Folly. The woodman and his wife were actual acquaintances of the authoress in her childhood.

IRENE'S DREAM

Old Urien with the grizzling auburn locks,
That on his sloping shoulders floated loose,
And worn red jacket, with his wrinkled face
And grave spare speech, quaint as some foreign
tongue.

It was his very self I dreamed back there ;
In his low woodland hut he reigned supreme
O'er tangled copse and thicket, and his axe
Rang with a sound of gloomy sovereignty ;
While silent Nesta in and out of doors
Moved busy as some weird and withered spider.
The garden was *my* realm.

And then at last
There came a stranger visitor for whom
I seemed to have been waiting all my life,
So swiftly our souls met and then the pain,
The loneliness, the blankness of my loss.

After the disappearance of the stranger, Irene describes how, in her dream, she, still dwelling in the old "Fairies' Folly," becomes intimate with those mysterious beings who are supposed now to have possession of it.

"And oh, that passing next from human life
Into the lovely, mournful Fairy-land,
Where beauteous Art, and knowledge of all things

IRENE'S DREAM

That books can teach, shone bright upon my soul,
Without books—and the images and thoughts
Of noble fiction, such as we receive,
Here, by dead written signs, into our soul
Were *lived* around and with me, everywhere
Peopling the vivid atmosphere with forms
That here are only names—and none the less
My heart was desolation. But my mind
Grew great with wisdom, and with strange new
truths—

Now fading, as the days go, to a blank—
Of all that dream-world nothing left but pain.

* * * * *

In *that* dream I have lived out all my life,
Exhausted all the possibilities
Kept bright on Time's horizon—such a glow
Of more than earthly daylight left behind
As makes this earth one twilight—such a glimpse—
This mystery's door—into the Universe
As makes Earth seem a prison
Such brief companionship with mighty souls,
Such vast imaginations—gone from me
Past all recovery—as have left my brain
Bereaved for ever Oh! And Love so strange
Turned to as strange a loss—in that one night
Have smit my life with loneliness, and left me,
Amongst the known and the belov'd, forlorn.

IRENE'S DREAM

My last strength has been spent in filling up
As to unseen dictation—for I feel
As if it were my hand, not I, that wrote
In hurried words the outline of my dream,
Such as may faintly render it to you—
But oh, how faintly !”

So she said and died,

II.—THE DREAM

This and the following Scenes must be supposed to be the record, unconsciously made by Irene, of what further happened in her dream.

SONG OF THE FAIRIES

WE servants of the myriad Federation,
The sweet ascending scale of linkèd life,—
How long shall we 'gainst man's rude domination,
With harsh defacement rife,
Array our things of beauty in a fruitless strife ?

For ever as the alien soul of Man,
Still the one discord in our harmony,
Breaks in on the just balance of the plan
That our sweet world lives by—
Once happy as its fellows in yon infinite sky.

IRENE'S DREAM

We soulless instincts, changing essences,
Voices and colours wandering everywhere,
Swarm round his wasteful track by slow degrees,
The rude rents to repair,
And with new growths replace the loss of what was
fair.

With delicate mosses and with gracious weeds

* * * * *

But souls there are that live in unison
With all the beautiful in heaven and earth ;
Our darlings they—and each a lonely one,
Predestined from its birth
To the pale gloriole of unkinned, unmated worth.

And such is she around whose nest we hover
And hold her footsteps from the world's high road,
And all her being with a mystery cover,
That in her wild abode
Mankind may shun her beauty as the fool the toad.

Alas ! we shield her but with fantasies ;
Our music is a phantom of man's mind ;
Yet brainless fancies oft and hollow lies,
Mere nothings, thin as wind,
Have shut out a whole world of beauty from man-
kind.

IRENE'S DREAM

We whisper tales of some mysterious fate ;
That wise and fools alike, the good and bad,
May shudder past her never-opened gate,
As from a dungeon sad,
And call the lovely, lonely creature mad.

III.—THE DREAM. MAY

A TOURIST on his native English ground,
One sweet May afternoon, did Florestan
Seek for his dog strayed on some idle chase.
There was a beauty in the land around,
A sweet and tender sameness, grave perchance
And dim, in still mid-summer, but in spring
Smiling with all the ornaments of youth,
When April's greenery, dropped here and there
With light touch on the framework of the trees,
Had spread and deepened to the bowery grace
And snowy blossom of exuberant May.
And low, veiled warblings wandering through the
 air
All in the loudest, maddest bird-song burst.
And deepest thickets and the loneliest lanes
Vibrated to the midnight nightingale.
And narrow pathways, parting the rich grass,
Tempted the idler o'er the meadow stile,
His feet bedropt with gold-dust as he walked,

IRENE'S DREAM

Whilst the twin syllables whose world-old fame
(Unheeded by the singer) laughs to scorn
The myriad-fancied poet of to-day,
Still with new pleasure charmed the expectant ear,
And quiet homesteads, with their garden gates
O'erarched by lilac and larburnum sprays
Or veiled behind a vaporous rosy cloud
Of apple-blossoms, to the passer-by
Hinted all Eden in a moment's glance.
So, wandering and still seeking for his dog,
Across a daisied flat his search at last
Guided him to a quiet little stile
The entrance to a solitary copse
Margined with blue by dewy hyacinths
And walled in with white bowers of hawthorn
bloom.

And, as he paused a moment, gazing in,
Two little maidens passing by, their hands
Filled with gold blossoms from the cowslip mead,
Cried, "Sir, you must not go there—no one ever
Goes near that place."

"Why not, my little maids?
What place is this?"

"'Tis called the Fairies' Folly.
There is a house, but no one goes to it,
Nor to the pleasure-grounds, nor yet this wood."
"But who lives there?"

IRENE'S DREAM

“ Only the lady, Sir—

But she is mad.”

“ Mad ! And she lives alone ? ”

“ Oh, Sir, old Urien's cot is in that wood,
And his wife Nesta. Do not you go near him !
All are afraid of him. Sometimes he comes
At evening to the village shop to buy,
But no one speaks to him.”

And with a smile,
Whilst the two little speakers stood aghast,
Over the stile leapt Florestan, and still
Calling his truant, followed the woodpath.
A growling summons from the hazel copse—
Where with suspended axe and wrathful glare
Lifted his head the auburn-haired old man,
Like one who hates the rest of humankind
“ You must go back, or 'twill be worse for you
The lady sees no strangers ”—stayed him not.
Keen impulse urged him on, till suddenly
An archway of two meeting elm-tree boughs
Disclosed a startling glitter of blue lake—
On one side o'er a shrubbery's verdant growth,
With pink and lilac and gold blooms enwrought,
White glimpses of a house, a path along
The water's reed-fringed margin, where the sun
Brooded from May's warm sky, and gleaming
things

IRENE'S DREAM

Danced ever in the air—led up his feet
To a small gate, the long grass round him stained³
With the blue shade of dewy hyacinths.
Next came the joyous bark of his lost dog,
'Then a low murmur of sweet questioning sound ;
And into the green arch Irene stepped.
The creature fawning on her, her pure face
A luminous lily bent with asking looks,
And gentle hands parrying each rough caress.*
"She is not mad" within himself he said,
As she raised up her head, rayed lightly round
By the faint halo of her pale gold hair,
And turned on him her earnest and strange eyes,
Whose half-wild light seemed caught by comrade-
ship
With Nature's wild things. "No, she is not mad—
She is inspired."

Long after could he not
Have uttered half his thoughts of what she was
In thrice the words—But suddenly a thought

* In another version follow the lines—

And there he saw throned on a rustic chair,
With lilac-fretted robes, a sorceress-queen.
For so she seemed, who stretched her regal hand
Toward the twos and threes of twittering things
Who perched and fluttered off, and perched again,
Or for a moment crowned her pale bright hair,
And at her feet his little truant lay.

IRENE'S DREAM

Of wonder, joy, and terror together seemed
To kindle all her stillness into fire.
Her lips part and her hands are clasped, and he,
“Pardon, I seek this rebel.”—All at once
Her face changed, and in quick low tones abrupt
She spoke to him, “Your dog will not come
back ;
He has chosen me instead.”

He called, and still
His favourite closer to the lady pressed,
While he with the vexed master's instinct strove
Some moments longer 'gainst the counter-charm,
Loth to be foiled, and called and called in vain—
Then yielded smiling, though reluctantly ;
“The dog is yours since he has made his choice.”
“And now,” said she, “Osiris is his name.”
And on the pretty, happy, new-found friend—
His tawny shagginess quivering at her touch—
She shed such smile as the sweet Elfin Queen
Sheds on her last babe-changeling ; then with eyes
Fixed on the stranger for a moment's space
In silence, “Come,” said she with grave command,
“Come now and see my garden.”

Instantly,
Wondering and smiling at himself the while,
But reverent of her strange simplicity,
Obedient as the dog he followed her.

IRENE'S DREAM

(Here probably occur four lines spoken to himself by Florestan while musing on the insanity commonly attributed to Irene

By common minds who run but where they're led.)
He thought the while, "No marvel she's misread :
Her beautiful monotony of leisure,
Her delicate dream-life under the green trees,
Her eyes (that but in Nature seek all pleasure)
To *these* are but a shape of soul disease."

* * * * *

And so, as Fate would have it, did these two
Wander together through those sweet May hours,
Intent the while, she on the strange delight
Of showing so much beauty to new eyes,
The first to share it with her—he on her—
Still more and more bewitched with novelty,
And all with hasty admiration fired
At her strange serious talk and earnest ways ;
But tempered with the half-shy consciousness
Native to hearts that oftentimes in extremes
Have passed through all, as yet unworn and young.
To him emotions ever came as new—
Unguarded fires—reflection later came.

IRENE'S DREAM

IV.—THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

(FLORESTAN AND IRENE)

FLOR. No, I will tell you nothing of my world, —
That which I see and know and do in it—
And what you too will see and know one day,
Till I hear more of this strange life of yours ;
But what a life ! And what a loneliness !
Have you thus always lived companionless,
Expending heart and soul on heartless things
And soulless ? Have you nothing else to love ?

IRENE. But what more need I then to have ? If
love

All that's around me. Every tint and shade
Of flower, or leaf, or moss. . . .
Is answered by a tender thought in me.
From seed to blossom I work for and with them.
We are one family.

FLOR. You are content
To love without return then ?

IRENE. Without other
Return than fancy in their beauty reads,
And fragrance still more delicate than song.
But in the warm and gay and restless life
Of birds and butterflies and little soft
Four-footed things, indeed my heart expands

IRENE'S DREAM

To its full joy—each in their way, they love me.
You do not understand how good, how true,
How perfect are their natures. And in truth
There are more things you know not I could tell ;
For, though alone, I have not been untaught.

FLOR. You are a priestess speaking mysteries.
Tell me of this strange science that you boast,
And who your teachers are.

IRENE. They are my dreams.
My dreams recall to me what infancy
Witnessed perhaps, and heard unconsciously.
I have no waking memory of the time
When I was not an orphan.

FLOR. Oh, go on !

IRENE. I am used to the strange things that come
to me ;
Yet sometimes I have moments of deep wonder.
Father and mother I have never known ;
But in my dreams they talk to me and teach me.
My father to this very lawn has led me,
And with a soundless voice and shadowy presence
Has pointed out and named to me the stars,
From whence the secrets of the Universe
Shall one day be revealed to our blind race
Now feeling in the dark—where, step by step,
From planet up to planet, sun to sun,
Each centre of new Planet-worshippers—

IRENE'S DREAM

The ignorant craving spirit of mankind
Shall travel to that unknown Something which
Has no name yet, nor history. . . .
For tales and feeble fancies fill its place—
But shall be found yet when the time is ripe,
And man's intelligence, with every age
Doubling and trebling its once laboured pace,
Shall soon move boldly to its awful goal.
So to that Future I send up my thoughts,
If e'er these garden bounds seem strait to me,
And live at large in the whole Universe.

FLOR. You seem to me the prophetess of Death
And not the priestess of a living Faith.
But tell me more of this dream-teaching.

IRENE. Much
I feel and could not tell—taught without words.

FLOR. How did you learn to make the creatures
love you?

This very dog has felt the spell and broken
His faith to me for you.

IRENE. It was my mother—
The mother of my dreams—for oft she used
To visit me and take me by the hand—
With smiles so sweet as sometimes made indeed
My heart to ache with longing when I waked—
And led me round the garden, showing me
The lovely kinship of its various growths,

IRENE'S DREAM

Leaf, flower, and stem and fibre of the plant,
A gracious mimicry of livelier life,
Pointing the links that chain the least and lowest
To life placed on the summit of the scale.
She taught me all the language of the birds,
And made it seem a human speech to me ;
And all the meaning of that fearless joy
That fills the world with movement.

FLOR. Tell me more.
The life you praise seems half a miracle.
Whence came these parents in their lifetime who
In dreams thus watch over your orphanhood ?
And did they leave you friendless and alone ?

IRENE. I am not friendless. I could tell you more,
But you are almost smiling.

FLOR. No, not so—
Or if I smile, I reverence your words
For your faith's sake and loftiness of thought.
I learn from you more than I could repay
By any teaching from the world without.

IRENE. I know not whence my parents came ; I
think
Not they, but some yet older habitant
Built this lone mansion, which you say is like
A foreign stranger from some southern clime
Surprised to find itself on English soil.

FLOR. I have seen such in Italy—but now

IRENE'S DREAM

I long to hear more. How are you not friendless ?
What human creature save that surly pair
Comes to your lonely home ?

IRENE. No human creature—
Not wholly human—and I see them not—
But they are here and watch me.

FLOR. Nay, but who ?

IRENE. My kindly Fairies. They are more to me
Than Urien is, or Nesta.

FLOR. Now indeed
You make me smile. But I am wrong ; you have
Some hidden undermeaning you will surely
Deign to unfold.

IRENE. You never then have lived
In fairy-haunted places, nor perchance
Know what they are ?

FLOR. Tell me all that *you* know.
My fairies only live in tales and ballads.

IRENE. I know what my dreams teach me and
will tell you
What I have learnt from them—how, long of yore,
When these once seething isles had passed at length
From shape to shape, and each extravagance—
As nightmares, monstrous beauty, ugliness
Colossal in its daring—to the firm
Mould it is cast in now, a race of men
Unknown, unnamed, a guess, a mystery,

IRENE'S DREAM

Peopled its o'ergrown and fantastic wilds,
But in some sweeping ruin passed away,
As great primeval forests fall in flames ;
And the new race that burnt it off the land,
As a devouring fire, was heir to all

FLOR. Continue—do not hesitate ; I hear
With reverence This or something like to this,
I do know. Tell me more.

IRENE. How strange it seems
To talk about the mysteries of things
At last to human ears in the broad day.
I have lived so long in silence and in dreams.

FLOR. And I, fresh from the noisy, busy world
Of glare and labour, find it strange to light
On such a green oasis of sweet rest,
And hear the beauteous marvels told at leisure
By one who toils not, and who lives on beauty.
Finish your wonder-tale.

IRENE. You know then how
Some shadows linger still of the old race,
Which, dwindled to a shadow of itself,
Survives in the frail elfin essences,
Bloodless and sinewless and beautiful,
That now are fading fast to nothingness,
But still in some rare chosen spots are found—
Such as this garden.

FLOR. Are you very sure

IRENE'S DREAM

Of any fairy presence save your own ?

When have you seen these elves with bodily eyes ?

IRENE. Not seen . . . but *felt*. You do not understand

How one may have a conscious certainty

Of what one has not seen. But I *have* seen,

Or almost seen, ofttime e'en in broad noon,

In the wide halls and chambers of the house,

A flitting of swift shadows on the walls,

Just glimpsed and gone, giving a consciousness

Of some invisible companionship.

And on this very lawn, on summer nights,

A whole new world awakes, and is astir.

Oft as the moon falls bright upon the sward,

These tall tree forms in solemn concourse met—

Slim darksome spire and lofty rounded tower

Seem, each with his black shadow at his foot,

Like creatures conscious of a secret doom ;

All through the solemn silence on the watch

To hear the wild talk of the nightingale,

As with a silver shock it suddenly

Pierces the silence from the sombre wood,

And all the garden rings with a new life ;

And all my chamber, as I listening lie,

Thrills with the startling outburst that proclaims,

In syllables as distinct as yours and mine,

Things I could never tell to you again

IRENE'S DREAM

In any human language. Then it is
I know all wakeful creatures of the night
Are sharers in the fairy revelry ;
Nay, sometimes, as I sink again to sleep,
With all that music trembling through my dreams,
A tiny, tinkling laughter blends with it,
And airy talk and rustlings to and fro,
Out in the rustling garden. Up I start,
And catch the last faint stirring of the small
Tumult below—then all is still again,
And I again am baffled.

FLORENCE. So I fear
You will be always. You are too alone.
I would I could persuade you to come forth
And see what life is. There are other things
Than flowers and gardens on our planet, Earth ;
And they are worth your seeing.

IRENE. Tell me of them.
'Twill be a new delight to hear such things
Safe in my quiet home. Tell me *your* life
And all you do. An hour ago I asked you,
And yet you have not answered me.

FLO.An hour!
A lifetime rather. Such an hour as this.

* * * * *

IRENE. I can scarce believe
How little time ago we had not met.

IRENE'S DREAM

FLOR. And I must go. But may I come again ?

IRENE. Yes, come and tell me what the world is like.

FLOR. And may I take a lily back with me ?

IRENE. I never yet have gathered flower or bud,
Lest the slight life should feel a tiny pang.

FLOR. Adieu, then.

IRENE. Did I grieve you ? Here, then, take it !

She gave the tiny stem with all its pearls
In the green sheath half folded from the light,
Into his reverent hand. As if to speak,
He lingered yet a moment, while the scent
Of those dear flower bells, like veiled music, charmed
His senses—then abruptly turned and went.
And as he passed upon his way he saw
The white hall gleam through fresh-leaved chestnut
boughs
That overbowered the three sides of a square
Of waving grass. The house filled up the fourth,
A sunlit dream.

Then, as the little gate
Of a rich flowering shrubbery let him through
Into the wide green slope of pleasure ground,
He saw again the shining lake below.
With careless truth reflecting as it lay,
The rosy fancies of the setting sun.

IRENE'S DREAM

V.—THE ROSE

IRENE craved for Florestan's return—
The sweet surprise of his companionship
Kept fresh its strangeness thro' the quiet hours.
And now she listened for a newer voice
As once she listened for the nightingale.
The light vicissitudes of life in dreams,
The round of flowery change, incomplete loves
Of half-souled creatures, now no more sufficed.
She longed to share her joy in them with one
Who loved them too. She felt the human charm.
A world of things to ask and say sprang up
Ever within her—and at last he came.
With shining looks she met him in the hall.
The heart-beat of a startling joy had called
A moment's rose upon her pearl bright cheek.
Then once more the soft cloud came o'er her face.

* * * * *

Here the account of the Dream breaks off ;
and with it apparently the author's intention as
to the final issue of the story is changed. The
writer, resuming the subject after a long pause,
left behind her the ideal Irene, the shadowy
resemblance of her long-lost sister and herself,
and determined to make the character the vehicle

IRENE'S DREAM

of thoughts which the observations of life had gradually stored up in her. She used it to depict various phases of woman's life and destiny in the present day. Irene dies, it is true, but not of a "Phantom of the Mind." She has been induced by Florestan to enter the world which she has never known, and where she is speedily *desillusionée*. Her lover deserts her and she goes through stages of anguish, which terminate in a resolution to rise above the sense of her own personal wrongs and devote herself to the betterment of the human social sphere she has entered, and in whose real and deep interest she seems to have found a substitute for the imaginary world of her girlhood. But all that is left us of this second more human part of the story consists in fragments, which we give as we find them.

The first of these is apparently a conversation of Irene and a friend, probably one of the spirit-world who looks coldly yet with prescience on the passions and griefs of the humankind.

IRENE.

I made part

Once for a short time of a human world,

Warm with the glow of a fond human love.

I know not if I missed of my true self

IRENE'S DREAM

In loving thus, but I will live henceforth
My shadowy life and never look behind.

FRIEND. His life, too, as it wears, will lose its
bloom ;
He will meet storm-clouds, like the rest of men,
For all the brilliance of the present hour.
But think not they will bring him back to you,
You are past out of his thick crowded life.
The stage upon his journey left behind
He never will return to.

IRENE. Will he not then
Ever think tenderly of my true love ?
If in the hurrying battlefield of life
A random hand should strike a limb from me,
I can forgive that wrong, aye, learn one day
To love the hasty wronger ; but, oh, tell me
If my own friend beside me in the ranks
Murders me with an ever-bleeding wound,
Must I forgive him ? Must I love him still ?
Forgive him, yes. If writhing in my pangs
I tore him as wild, wounded creatures tear,
The pain I gave would only double mine.
But—love him ? Ah, that is the torturing pang—
To love that which we scorn, and suffer from it,
Oneself, a sense of humbling and disgrace.
I scorn the poor false heart that cheated mine,
The wavering heart that wasted mine away,

IRENE'S DREAM

The thief who robbed me of the years to come,
And doomed them to so desolate a close.

I scorn him, but I suffer, suffer still.

FRIEND. He made no vow, he broke no pledge
to you ;

And what cares love for vows ? Be still his
friend !

IRENE. How found true friendship on a love
betrayed ?

If he had come to me in generous pain,
And said "Forgive me ! I did love you once,
But now I love another." Then at least
I could have honoured him for his brave truth,
And for the truth's sake would have pardoned him,
Mourning that imperfection in myself
Which made my heart so powerless to hold his.
But thus to leave me feeling in the dark
In blind despair, to know how first, and why,
I lost my treasure, whether it slipped from me.

* * * * *

Oh, I complain not that he weds with her,
Since her he loves, not me ; but could I know,
Could I but know that he did love me once,
I were content.

FRIEND. But that you cannot know ;
For men deny their love when it is passed,
Deny first and forget it afterwards.

IRENE'S DREAM

Nothing in this world ever is explained.
You will live sighing but to hear one word,
And you will die without it. It must be,
For you were happy when you were beloved,
And you were beautiful when you were happy;
But now you are not happy nor beloved,
And therefore are no longer beautiful.

IRENE. He thinks it then
Meet homage to a pure and happy love
To falsify the past? Can a true love
Degrade the soul so?

THE LAST FRAGMENT

The Doctor spoke her doom and went his way.
And she—soon as the quiverings of the flesh
That are within the torture-chamber's door
Where Death is waiting, calmed themselves
again—
Sank down upon her couch and thought and
thought,
“I die who have not lived ! Too late, too soon !
To die a martyr in the burning flame
Without the martyr's hope, the martyr's cause !
The restless strife to cease and nothing done !
For this I have loved, have lost and scorned my
love,

IRENE'S DREAM

Have dreamed of goodness and a bettered world,
Have loathed my race, writhed at my sisters'
 wrongs,
Abhorred as hypocrites our masters, men,
The slaves of vice and folly, who have learnt
The list of woman's virtues well by heart ;
To preach them to us with paternal smile,
Or pelt them at us with unhallowed sneers—
Then blushed repentant of my scorn, and asked
How am I better who have dreamed and yearned,
And passionately talked, but never yet
Have lifted up a finger for my kind ?”

* * * * *

No more I love you, now I only love
That which I thought you were ; I have my dream
Unrealised, and therefore still my dream.
He has the real, he has all he sought ;
And found it *nothing*.

Another version, only conceived, with no attempt made to put it into words, was to represent Irene as not only forsaken but betrayed ; and the author's purpose was to show how a woman may rise above the wronger and the wrong to heights whence she can look down at once on the fact, her own weakness, the social punishment and disgrace, and the unworthy one

IRENE'S DREAM

himself, with the just view, the calm compassion, only not contempt, of a true and deep-felt superiority. She will not dwell for ever on the past in weak and exaggerated penitence and humility ; she will go forward with all the power and wisdom her past experience has given her, to a purer air and nobler objects. This would have been a difficult lesson to work out, and possibly beyond the writer's powers ; she contented herself with meditating deeply on the problem as brought in real life before her.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

AFTER one or two slight beginnings of romantic historical dramas, she made, in 1855, a more serious attempt on a more ambitious subject and in a style that denotes a considerable advance of power. This was the story of King Pedro the Cruel of Castille and his conflict with his illegitimate brothers, Fadrique and Enriquez. Her object was to depict the deterioration of a young noble nature under unnatural circumstances, the temptations of power, the sense of early cruel wrongs to himself and those he loved, the growing bitterness of an unnatural conflict, and the half-madness which all these causes produced in a hot, impetuous, though naturally a generous, temper. The one redeeming feature all through was his constant and devoted love to the beautiful young Andalusian, Maria de Padilla, whom in this drama he is supposed, as he is

PEDRO THE CRUEL

indeed afterwards asserted, to have privately married. Under her gentle influence he consents to pardon his rebellious brothers who are living in exile, when the drama opens, soon after Pedro's accession to the crown and his secret marriage with Maria.

Nine consecutive scenes were written. We shall extract the following :

ACT I., SCENE III

MARIA *and* JUANITO *her young brother*

JUAN. Maria ! thou art very beautiful.

MARIA. Oh Juanito ! Thou art not the first Sweet flatterer who has told me so to-day.

JUAN. Who was the other then ?

MARIA. Who but my mirror ?
It whispered to me in the corridor
As I passed by just now, "How fair thou art
To-day. Maria !"

JUAN. Didst thou answer it ?

MARIA. Oh Juanito, never be so witched
By vanity as I was ; for what think'st thou ?
Soon as I heard that whisper I turned back
And curtseyed to the self that stood before me
Smiling and curtseying too.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

JUAN. Sister, the King
Once told me that my eyes were just like yours,
And so I think he loves you for my sake ;
For he will give me anything I ask him,
And makes as much of me as of a prince.

MARIA. My little brother, if the King so loves thee,
Thou must love him. If all the world forsook him,
Thou wouldst still stand beside him, wouldst thou not?

JUAN. Yes, that I would.

MARIA. Then there's a kiss for thee.
Now run away and gather me some grapes
And figs, and leaves and flowers to deck them with.

[*Exit*] UANITO.

There ! there, I hear him ! Surely it was he.

Enter PEDRO.

Pedro !

PEDRO. My love ! my beauty !

MARIA. Oh my Pedro !

PEDRO. My love ! my love ! how oft I dreamed
of thee

Before the walls of Aguilar !

MARIA. Sweet Cid !

Had no one told me thou com'st back a conqueror,
The rapture of thy step along the gallery,

PEDRO THE CRUEL

The light that burst in with the opening door,
Would have revealed it.

PEDRO. Thou art more to me
Than twice a hundred victories! Yet indeed
I am a conqueror and a King to-day—
Victory abroad, and love at home. Oh see,
Maria, never yet was King so blest.

MARIA. Now tell me everything. Tell me, my Lord,
Where is Alonzo Coronel ?

PEDRO. He is dead.

MARIA. What, did he perish in th' assault?

PEDRO. Not so ;
He fell into our hands and was despatched
Before my eyes.

MARIA. Ah, that was not *thy* doing !
Where Albuquerque is, there the tender foot
Of mercy has no place.

PEDRO. Yet by my soul
I almost longed to save him. Never knight,
Though a false traitor, was so proudly brave.
When all was lost, when thro' the breach my men
Stormed in behind my banner, like a flood,
He scorned to lift a hand in vain appeal.
He made no prayer for mercy; he was found
Bowing his haughty head before the Mass,
And asked no favour save a speedy death.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

MARIA. How royal look'st thou in thy pity,
Pedro !

It well becomes thee.

PEDRO. And how beautiful

Thy lips look when they flatter ! Thou hast but
to open them

And all thy thoughts are mine.

MARIA. Am I a witch, then ?

PEDRO. The queen of Andalusian sorceresses !

MARIA. And yet, my husband, yet that Coronel
Better deserved his fate than Garci Laso !

He who deserted in her utmost need

And hour of sorrow, Leonor,* his Lady,

Was false to manhood and his knighthood's faith.

Ne'er was he worthy of a Prince's trust.

PEDRO. I was a boy then, but those days are o'er !

But lo, Maria, in the joy of meeting

I had forgot a strange perplexity

For which we must take counsel. Blanche of
Bourbon

Has crossed the Pyrenees ; my aunt and mother

Are gone to meet her.

MARIA. Let me pity her

For loss of such a happiness. Ah, Pedro !

I robbed her e'er she knew her treasure's worth.

* Leonora de Tellez, mistress of King Alonzo, and brother of
Pedro's half-brothers.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

But we were wrong to let the time fly by
In that sweet thoughtlessness.

PEDRO. The hour has come !
Now, now will I proclaim thee to Castille
As my true wedded queen.

MARIA. Pedro, not so !
To do that now were now to lose Castille.
Thou must not yet in all the people's eyes
So shame thy father's crown.

PEDRO. By Heaven, that man
Who dares to say my crown is shamed by thee,
Shall lose his lying tongue. I am the King,
And she I wed, whoe'er she be, is queen.
Let all Castille gainsay it, if it dare !

MARIA. Ah, let me linger here a little longer,
Caged in the green bowers of this Paradise,
A little longer, ere thou lead'st me up
The proud stair of the throne. I am so happy !
I love to dream myself thy secret angel.
I do not want with jewelled royalty
To crown a scornful brow and tread Castille
Beneath a conqueror's foot.

PEDRO. Scorn'st thou my crown?
It is the noblest thing I have to give thee.

MARIA. What ! nobler than thy heart ? And does
my husband
Think that his wedded wife disdains his crown,

PEDRO THE CRUEL

That gracious diadem that flings its light
From stern Galicia's heights and fierce Biscay
To lordly Cordova and sweet Seville ?
Let him not think so for his true wife's sake.

PEDRO. Then wear it !

MARIA. Nay, too much I honour it
To put it on ere I have learnt the lesson
How to become it gracefully and well.

PEDRO. And Blanche of Bourbon ? Wilt thou have
me lead

Her to the altar before God and man,
When God and man have bound me unto thee ?
Give me that ring ; perchance 'twill fit *her* hand.

MARIA. No, my sweet Pedro ! Thou must take
good counsel

How courteously and kingly to put by
The bride thy mother and thy tutor found thee—
But oh, what talk we ? Are we not like children
Whom soon the rod will threaten back to duty ?
Canst thou withstand thy master to his face ?

PEDRO. Now hush, Maria ! Am I not the King ?
And yet time was, he was my only friend.
He gave me royal nurture when my father
Forgot his heir—he gave my mother honour
When her own husband taught the world to scorn
her.

He *was* my friend.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

MARIA. God gave thee better friends :
But thou hast suffered man to put them from thee.

PEDRO. Whom speak'st thou of ?

MARIA. Thy brothers, oh my husband.
Alas, thy father's orphans have been wronged,
Because thy father loved them, and because
God hath exalted thee so far above them.

PEDRO. So far as I was once abased beneath them.
I was my father's heir—*they* were his children.
They grew up in the sunshine—I in shadow.
My childhood's curse, my boyhood's bitterness,
Above all others was Enriquez' name.
Oft as my father showered fresh graces on him,
My mother tortured with her sighing pity,
And murmurs of despairing jealousy
The blushing agonies of my child's pride.
How would she prophesy o'er her victim boy
A thousand wrongs and perils from Enriquez,
And every lip around me echoed her.
If I offended in my waywardness,
I was chastised with mention of his name.
Failed I in any martial enterprise
Of sword or spear, or feat of horsemanship,
Still was I taunted with Enriquez' skill.
"How," would they ask, "wilt thou defend thy
crown
From him hereafter who so far excels thee ? "

PEDRO THE CRUEL

As sinners with the devils, so was I
Still threatened with Enriquez. Such the lesson
Burnt into me from my cradle.

MARIA. Ah, unlearn it !
Now thou art raised so high, and they brought
low.

PEDRO. Maria, I will not sue to them again
To let me pardon them ! They trust me not !
Like young wild hawks, amid the northern hills,
Cowering and fiercely shy, deaf to my voice,
In dangerous sullen silence still they watch me.

MARIA. Their mother, Pedro ! Oh, their murdered mother !
How should they trust thee ? How should they
come near thee ?

Blessed be God, the crime was none of thine ;
But he who did it is thy minister,
And stands so near thee that his guilt's vast shadow
Blots thy young royalty. What, must I kneel ?

PEDRO. Thou look'st so lovely so, I will not raise
thee.
Speak thy petition.

MARIA. Wilt thou say me no ?

PEDRO. Try me. What wilt thou ?

MARIA. May it please Don Pedro,
Recall thy brothers, banish Albuquerque.

PEDRO. 'Tis granted, love, joyfully, fully, freely !

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Already for thy sake I love my brothers ;
Already in my heart I do embrace them ;
Next to myself and thee they shall have worship,
And all Castille shall know them for my friends.

MARIA. Now is my heart in tears with happiness.

PEDRO. Risest thou not? What more dost thou require?

MARIA. His suppliant further will entreat Don
Pedro

That he will royally and reverently
Entreat the Lady Blanche in all things, saving
To take her for his queen.

PEDRO. Granted as well.

What wilt thou more?

MARIA. That it may please Don Pedro
To take the orphans of Don Juan de Lara,
Doña Juana and Doña Isabel,
Out of the hands of Juan de Albuquerque,
And give the eldest to her affianced lord,
Don Tello, brother to the said Don Pedro.

PEDRO. Granted. What further?

MARIA. May it please Don Pedro
To take no step rashly or hastily,
But first to take due counsel from those true
And sage advisers that his wife shall name,
To wit, her Uncle Juan Hinetrosa,
Don Simuel Levi, the King's treasurer,

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Diego de Padilla, his wife's brother,
And lastly one Maria de Padilla,
His servant, friend, and wife unto all time.

PEDRO. Granted, my love.

MARIA. Now may I kiss thy hand,
And rise the happiest of all suppliants.
For happiness is hallowed by good deeds,
And flowers and fruit are mingled on one tree.

ACT II

Opens with a scene in the castle of Don Enriquez de Trastamara amidst the mountains of the Asturias, where, still mistrusting his royal brother, though nominally reconciled, he has taken refuge with his Countess and his young sister Juana. The Count is, after his wont, out hunting while the two ladies thus converse:

JUANA. The music of Don Pedro's wedding-bells
Will not ascend to us from Valladolid.
All will be feasting and rejoicing there,
And here will all be solemn quietness.
But where will be Fadrique? . . . Would he
were here.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

COUNTESS. He would be wiser still to hold his
post

As head of Santiago—at Llerena.

Amongst his knights he may abide his time,
As we in this dull stronghold abide ours.

JUANA. I almost wonder that you find this life
So hard to bear, you a young wife still new
To happy marriage. We have had much sorrow ;
But there is something in this mountain air
So fresh from the pure sky, that rings like hope,
Here Nature's beauty has a holiness—
The rain-clouds wrap her like a vestal veil,
And when she draws them back to see the sun,
She scatters round her, over chasm and rock,
Colours like floating rainbows without form.
The sable mountains that crowd round our windows
Seem to gaze in upon our solitude
With a wild, gloomy friendship.
Here safely we look down on those hot plains,
The glaring world that we have left behind,
Where over towns and courts and camps the sun,
Dragon-like, ever watches, brooding murder.
The sparkling green of the unthirsty trees,
That court the blaze and never sigh for streams,
Looks harsh and unalluring, seen beside
White towers and houses—white indeed without,
But inly red with crime.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Their talk is interrupted by the return of Don Enriquez and the arrival of a secret agent of his from a mission whose object was to destroy Albuquerque, and gain the King's good graces through an alliance with the Padillas. The Count asks his agent what is thought of Don Pedro in the South. The answer is :

Sir, the common people
Begin already to distinguish him.
They fancy that already they perceive
Advancing on the path which he ascends
The shadow of a hero.

ENRI. And his tastes,
His fancies, day-dreams, what are they? which way
Point they? or have they any bent as yet?

Gov. I can judge little, yet thus much I gather
From what I see and hear ; he is more learned
In Moorish chronicles and Arab tales
Than in church legends, takes much greater joy
In Simuel Levi's talk than in a bishop's :
Sings ballads of the Cid with kindling cheek,
Then curses him for a rebel ; frankly jests
With artisan and peasant, and repays
Flattery of ricos-hombres with a sneer.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

We must pass over several scenes, and conclude with two which picture the state of things among these conflicting parties six years after, when Pedro had become an embittered and blood-stained tyrant, and Enriquez an open rebel. Pedro is at the same time at war with the King of Aragon, and Fadrique, who has retained his allegiance, takes part in his campaign.

SCENE I

*The tent of FADRIQUE. FADRIQUE and ENRIQUEZ
in disguise*

ENRI. You know me now, I am no monk at all.

FAD. Enriquez !

ENRI. Your twin brother. He—no other.

FAD. I cannot call you welcome.

ENRI. Yet embrace me.

That was not spoken like my kind Fadrique.

FAD. My first care be your safety. How and
when

Will you go hence ?

ENRI. This night, and as I came—

Furnished, moreover, with a pass from you.

FAD. It must be so ; I'll write it now. Enriquez,

PEDRO THE CRUEL

'Tis neither for your safety nor my honour
That you should cross our lines.

ENRI.

'Twas rash, I own,

But less so than it seems. The fault was yours—
I grew impatient of your indecision.

So near, yet not to meet ! First, here's a letter
I bring you from the King of Aragon.

FAD. Give it me. (*He burns it.*)

ENRI. Madman ! stay ! what have you done ?
If you so feared detection could you not
Have read the letter first ?

FAD.

I am not curious

To know what it contains.

ENRI.

What is your meaning ?

You anger me, by Heaven, yet I've scarce time
To chide you for your strangeness. I *must* bring
Assurance to the Court of Aragon

That we may count on you, else get I naught
But the bare shelter to my head he grants me.

We do not ask you to throw off the mask—

You are more useful to us thus—but only

To let us know your plan and work with you.

FAD. Then let us talk of other things, my brother—

'Tis long since we have met, and may be long

Before we meet again. And as for that

You came to talk of, let it be forgotten !

I mean no other than I seem to mean,

PEDRO THE CRUEL

To serve the banner of my brother Pedro,
And Saint Iago.

ENRI. Let me see your face !
No ! the lamp tells me that you are not jesting.
You really then are wearing next your heart
Don Pedro's royal pardon ? Really have
Forsworn rebellion 'gainst the Lord's anointed ?
And—oh the virtue of a lawful title !—
Are now your youngest brother's well-paid lackey ?
How little did I know you !

FAD. True—most true.

ENRI. You'll scarce have credit for such honesty
On our side of the frontier. Aragon.
Army and Court, count on you.

FAD. I am sorry
Your friends count on your brother for a villain.

ENRI. I'll not believe it yet. You are not mad—
You that refuse to plot against your tyrant,
Think you your tyrant does not plot 'gainst you ?
Or that the tiger that has tasted blood—
Nay, I might rather say has lapped it up
By bucketsful at Toro and Toledo—
Will never thirst again ? An ugly sight
For us who stand without the bars of his gate,
When crash ! the fool's head of his keeper jumps
Into the very jaws he courted. Come !
I tell you, you are doomed.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

FAD.

What if I be ?

I do not know why I should prize my life,
And I had rather die a traitor's death
Than be one.

ENRI. Oh, 'tis monstrous to be other

Than traitor in this cause. How shall I move you ?
Must I go over with you, page by page,
All our sad history ?

FAD.

I have not forgotten it.

ENRI. Oh, then more shame for you. Think,
think, Fadrique,

How when my father died, who loved us so,
Whose last breath sighed away our royalty,
Whose corpse we dared not follow to its grave ;
We, his best, first-born, dearest sons, shut out,
While common soldiers and the gaping rabble
Elbowed each other round his funeral vault,
And watched him into darkness. How the boy
Men had so long forgotten, from his nursery
Started upon a sudden to reign over us !
Then oh, what gnashing of the teeth were ours !
What scorn did grin, clap hands, and mock at us !
What deep-sworn friendship turned its back on us !
And what came next ? Have you forgotten that ?

FAD. No more, Enriquez !

ENRI.

How the crowned she-devil
Did, for the dear love that she bore her imp—

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Him that you kiss the feet of now, Fadrique—
Murder our mother—*murder* her, Fadrique !
By that cold violent edge of stabbing steel
Rude soldiers die by—with her poor cheeks still
Wet with the tears she wept within your arms
For hours long at Llerena—murdered her,
A woman, the most beautiful of women,
Her that, if love and faith make a true wife,
And nobleness of nature a true queen,
Was twenty thousand times more queen and wife
Than the curst thing our father called so. What ?
Now you turn pale—you were her darling—Well ?
Is that forgiven too ?

FAD.

Enough of this.

If for the desperate ends of your revenge,
And yet more your ambition, you can revel
In recollections scorching to the soul,
Enjoy the feast alone ! My mother's murder
You know that neither God nor I have pardoned.
The deed was none of Pedro's.

ENRI.

No, sweet boy !

What should he know of killing ?

FAD.

All the hands

That dabbled in it, as you know, are dead.
As for the other shames and scorns you speak of,
Our honours were all shames and scorns to Pedro.
Boylike he pardoned all, to suffer after

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Worse wrongs from us, my part in which have I,
Though never moved by hatred nor ambition,
Repented bitterly ; and by my soul
I think I pity him.

ENRI. Magnanimous !

Pity the foot upon your neck !

FAD. He is

Our father's son, and he may yet become
A King we should be proud to own for brother,
A brother we should love to own for King.

ENRI. *I own him for my King! I own him
brother!*

Can nature work so differently in twins,
That what *I* loathe like poison, pest, and death ;
The thing whose life torments my very dreams,
The creature who so lords it in the place
God, Nature, and my father meant for me,
Should seem to you a something to be coaxed
With tender speech and kneeled unto, for love ?
We live in different worlds.

FAD. None in past time
Did coax him with more tender speech than you.
It is my honesty offends you.

ENRI. Oh,

My purpose can lie crouching in a corner
Year after year, nor ever close an eye.
I'd do the same now, could I gain by it.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Why must *he* be your King? Why more than I,
Because my father took an ugly fiend
From Portugal to wife? That you forsake me
Is a worse treason against nature, brother,
Than mine could be 'gainst Pedro.

FAD.

Think not so.

ENRI. But if you cannot hate, then you can love.
Come let a sweeter voice plead to you! Never
Tell me that Blanche was not the magnet charmed
Your breathless sword out of its sheath what time
That tender bridegroom locked her up in jail
To comfort his Padilla. There, poor child,
She weeps and waits for her deliverer still.
My own Fadrique, I am not so lost
In cares for my own aims, though you do think it,
But that I have your happiness at heart.
Oh, I have planned for you! Let me remind you
When graceless Pedro on her wedding-day
Flew home to kiss away Padilla's tears,
Men called on you to avenge her. Where is she
now?

A prisoner still! Think of that fiery time
When we two, dear Fadrique, burst upon
The noon sleep of Toledo, filled its hot streets
With clamour and with swords, and hand to hand
Fought Pedro for her freedom—though in vain!—
Dare yet to strike another blow for her!

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Dare but to wish for her—and she shall be yours !
The Pope abhors our brother, whose profaneness
Befriends us with the Church—let *me* be King,
And at my prayer he shall undo that marriage—
The mockery that it is—set you two free,
And place the white sweet hand of Blanche in yours.
Then shall your sickly conscience grow in health,
Braced with a manly love and manly hate.
Oh, I have moved you now ! That trembling lip
Shows that your heart is human.

FAD. I will own
That you have moved me to the utmost. How
Could it be else, when you have mixed for me
In one cup all that's bitterest in my life ?
I deny not that I love Blanche, nor yet
That for her sake this eve is as a saint's
Sacred to me.

ENRI. How so ?

FAD. It was this day
Six years ago, I gave my hand to her,
For Pedro at Narbonne knelt at her side
Prayed with her, vowed to her another's faith,
And seemed her husband, then, when we rose up,
I hailed her queen and sister. And that night
I wandered in the dark aisles of the church
When all was over. 'Twas because I loved her
I flew into rebellion, not with hopes

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Like those you seek to breathe in me, but moved
By all of nature that's most blind and tender
To rescue her from Pedro. How we failed
You know, and how much worse we left her fate.
I cannot serve her by those means again.
It may be gentler means shall one day prosper.
I have no more to say.

ENRI. Adieu, Fadrique.
Cold lover, unkind brother, fare you well !

SCENE II

DOLORES, PEDRO's *aged Nurse*

DOL. So then, thou snake ! 'tis here thou mak'st
thy lair.

How cool and perfumed is this place, methinks
More bower than room. The plagues of Egypt
catch her.

Must she be lodged more royally than a queen ?
You might call this a hall of orange-trees,
Or birdcage barred with vines. She must have
doves too,

To murmur 'mongst the leaves with tender voice
While she sits plotting crime. Why, these are toys
For innocent fingers---all these silken stitched
And delicate works. Nay then, but see, what's this ?

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Her gilded book of Hours. What, *does* she pray,
And will her prayers be heard? Oh, I can see her
Queening it like some infidel enchantress
That Moorish stories tell of, gliding in
'Twix yonder crimson hangings with soft feet
And waving hence with her profane fair hand
Pedro's despairing angel. Poor fond boy!
Thou wilt not thank me; yet indeed thou shouldst,
For what I mean to do—give death to her
Whose life makes Pedro hated. Aye, I mean it,
E'en if my soul should go to hell for that,
As surely I believe 'twill go to heaven
For doing God good service.

Enter MARIA

MARIA. My Pedro!—Ah!—
You have some petition doubtless. Pray you sit.
I think that you are weary.

DOL. I am sad,
And 'tis you make me so, you dangerous lady.

MARIA. I see that you mistake me for some
other.

Whom do you seek, then?

DOL. I mistake you? No!
Oh, think not but I knew you at a glance.

MARIA. Tell me who are you, then?

PEDRO THE CRUEL

DOL. I am Dolores.

MARIA. Dolores, the King's nurse? Oh, welcome then.

Nay, now you *shall* be seated. My old friend,
This very day I do expect him home,
For he has left the camp. Sit down by me
And tell me of your journey.

DOL. I am come
Because that I am very near my death.
And wish to see my boy on earth once more.

MARIA. And you *shall* see him; he will soon be here.

I wish that you could love me.

DOL. Love you! What!
There are fools enough that love you for your eyes,

And for the grace cunning that, witch, your glass
Taught you to wind about you in your veil.

And must *I* love you too? Aye, tell me then,
If you be like an angel in your looks,
Are your deeds like an angel's?

MARIA. Dear Dolores,
Indeed I am no angel, yet I think
I am no devil neither, but a woman
That wishes harm to no one.—Stay, I have
A pretty nosegay for you that you'll own
Is made of most sweet flowers.. [*Claps her hands*

PEDRO THE CRUEL

Enter a SERVANT

Bring in my children.

DOL. (*To herself.*) Those hands that with one
light wave of her fan
Can summon Pedro's devil up from hell—
That smile when good men weep—

Enter NURSE and CHILDREN

MARIA. Now what say you, Dolores? are the
children
Of Pedro like him?

DOL. Oh, poor Blanche! Now God
Forgive thee, for, to look at them, these children
Should be a queen's. Is there grace in her, then!
Can those tears be true diamonds? Nurse, I pray
thee
Give me the baby—*this* I guess the eldest—
What is thy name? By Heaven she holds to me
Her little hand to kiss.

MARIA. Nay, she must not
Queen it to you. Embrace her, kind Dolores,
And she will tell her name.

BEATRICE. I am Beatrice.

DOL. The very brow of good King Don Alonzo!

MARIA. Some say she's like her uncle, Don
Fadrique.

PEDRO THE CRUEL

DOL. Let her not copy him ; his mother did
Foul wrong to Pedro's—and there ! her father's self !

MARIA. Constancia.

DOL. Child ! look up again. There ! there !
'Tis Pedro's self. And this dumb little one ?

MARIA. That's Isabel. Some say she is like her
mother.

DOL. And so she is. (*Aside.*) A mother and her
children !

And such a girl too ! Can I do it ? God !
I'll wait and watch her. Oh, you most rare creature,
That are so cruel and so beautiful,
How can you bear to purchase day by day
Your cup of golden pleasures with the tears
Of that poor girl that was anointed queen
To Pedro six long years ago—God help her—
Who wastes in prison now her innocent life ?

MARIA. Now witness heaven, if ever human words
Could wound a human heart, your words have done
it.

You do not know how deeply, no one does,
Nor how unjustly—but I blame you not.
Hark, 'tis Don Pedro ! Wait here, you shall see
him. [*Exit.*

DOL. How light of foot ! Were she as light of
conscience !

Is that the King ? No sure, and yet who else ?

PEDRO THE CRUEL

MARIA. Enter sweet Cid, and you shall see the
fairy

That's come so far to wish your children luck.

DOL. My son ! my son ! my own, own lord, my
Pedro !

I know you now—the very smile I used

To say would make men fear you. Dear my lord !

You look from crest to spur just the great King

I prayed to see you.

PEDRO. And father to the loveliest little queen
That e'er was born to see lovers fling crowns
Before her feet—am I not ?

DOL. That you are !

PEDRO. Wish her as many foes as she has charms
That she may smile upon the tears of all !

MARIA. For shame, Sir King ! My Beatrice will
never

Say Amen to that prayer !

(UNFINISHED)

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

SCENE I

HER next subject was chosen from the story of the Sicilian Vespers ; it was the rescue of Manfred's young daughter from the hands of Charles of Anjou.*

Ruggiero the fisher noble has swum to shore, his boat having foundered in a storm and, lying exhausted on the rock of Castel dell' Uovo, hears in a trance the voice of Beatrice (the imprisoned daughter of Manfred) singing from within the castle, inaudible to others.

SONG OF PROSERPINE

STILL thro' Christendom, still my mother seeks for
me ;

* For this subject, indeed, one whole period, she had carefully studied various authorities, especially Amari's "*Guerra del Vespro Siciliano*."

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

I as vainly seek for her—mother, mother, where is
she ?

Still, to seek the unrisen sun, still the fatal skylark
soars

That from Enna's vale at dawning rang me sweetly
out of doors,

Rang me to the dewy grass where the sweet narcissus
blows,

While the eastern heaven is blushing like the leaf
of a wild rose.

Oh, the white and golden blossoms ! more than my
small hands could hold,

Dancing, singing, here and there plucked I of the
white and gold.

Up he starts, the black magician ! like a cloud upon
the light—

Oh, the cruel Saracen ! bears me down with him to-
night,

Oh, the strange and silent twilight ! Oh, the slow
and solemn hours !

Oh, the larks of dewy Enna ! Oh, the dear narcissus
flowers !

Still through Christendom does my mother seek for
me ?

Shall I cry to her for ever, Mother, mother, where
is she ?

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

SCENE II

BEATRICE *in prison with FATMEY her Moorish nurse*

FAT. My lady and princess ! my jessamine flower !
How long shall thy poor slave sigh for thy voice,
For just one word ?

BEAT. Dear nurse, I thought to make
Some newness in our life by laying by
The old, old talk till it grew fresh again.

FAT. You have been sad and silent these three
hours,
Sweet lady mine !

BEAT. I have been wondering, nurse.
Yes, a new thought is breaking on my mind.
I grow to doubt of all things, and I thought
I should believe once more when hours and hours,
And days and days, had passed in silent thought ;
And then once more the wonderful lost life
Came back ; I dreamed it all, along with this.
Then when I slowly waked and saw the walls
Of this dim room break through the golden glow
I conjured round me, I would ask once more,
Can it be true that I was a king's daughter ?

Why, as I sit
And look on yonder little patch of blue
Through yon high grated window, there comes
sudden,

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

With a new horror, a new question—How
Came we two here, poor prisoners as we are?
Is all that you have told me all these years—
My own strange story, is it not a dream,
A tale to cheat the time like that you sang me
When I would cry in these dim rooms for light
And trembled at the roaring of the sea
Against my little pillow, as I thought—
Oh is it, is it very truth? Am I
Indeed a princess, Manfred's daughter, sister
To fair Queen Constance, you so love to speak of?
Is all this but delusion? and the dream
That fills my nights up, floods them all with glory
Of sunshine and blue sea unspeakable
That waking I shall never look upon,
A lovely lie—no more? Or did I once
Live kissed and petted through such golden hours
As now you tell of—happy, happy child!
Tell me, dear nurse, tell me once more, beseech
you,
Am I this king's child whom the world forgets?
Poor captive— orphan of so great a house!
Poor nurse, you weep.

FAT. My lady and princess !
My starry jessamine shining through the gloom !
By Allah ! all is true that I have told,
And more, much more . . .

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

All that the demon, on whose brows may yet
His golden crown turn into scorching steel,
Robbed you of in the rose light of your dawn.

SCENE III

LORIA *and* RUGGIERO, *rowing through the enemy's fleet
at night, hear voices talking in it*

HUSH ! He's the devil, who is ever nigh
When least we look for him. I was just as now,
When we lay idly off the Moorish coast
And thought he was a hundred miles away,
Bound for the plunder of the Grecian Isles.
And suddenly, by Heaven, the darkness roared
A thundering "Aragon and Sicily !"
And in a moment blazed around our fleet
A ring of fiery stars, and by their light
A swarthy swarm of eyes glared into ours
So close they seemed to touch. Thirty brave ships
Were lost to Anjou on that night, and blood
Poured out like water.

2ND VOICE. How did you escape ?

1ST VOICE. We set up their own war-cry and let
fly

Their signals—so got safely out from them.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

[LORIA and RUGGIERO pass round under PRINCE CHARLES of SALERMO's ship, where singing is going on

SONG. My Lady gave me a violet,
Gave me one violet out of three.
Long has it faded ; I keep it yet
Shrined in gold, to be buried with me.
I gave her the heart out of my breast—
'Twas all I had—and she keeps it yet ;
Keeps it and shows it with many a jest—
Yet it was worth that violet.

RUG. That is the prince's voice.

VOICE. (*Hailing them.*) What boat is there ?

RUG. We are poor fishers, toiling hard to catch
A supper for your lordships.

PRINCE. See you bring
A million of anchovies for our banquet,
When we have beaten Loria.

LORIA. Aye, my lord.
We will work miracles to please your Lordship.
[*Rows away.*

Young troubadour ! yourself's the costliest fish
Our nets are gaping for.

Then follows the battle of the Bay of Naples,
in which Loria, commanding the Sicilian fleet,
entirely defeats the French, and takes captive

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

Charles the Lamé, Prince of Salerno, eldest son of Charles of Anjou. His young wife, witnessing the scene from the Castello dell' Uovo, is joined there by the Cardinal Gherardo, both in great dismay, as Loria has threatened the life of the Prince unless the captive Beatrice is instantly surrendered.

SCENE.—PRINCESS OF SALERNO, GOVERNOR OF THE
CASTLE, CARDINAL GHERARDO

PRINCESS. Let me fly to her ! Instantly—where ?
where ?

Gov. Madam, to reach her you must bend your
steps

By many a cold and steep and winding stair
Below the very margin of the sea,
Into a vast vault lighted from above.

PRINCESS. A dungeon ! Oh !

Gov. No ; a dim princely state
She holds in those wide chambers, and, unseen,
She sees a glimpse of sky.

PRINCESS. No, no, I dare not !
I dare not fetch a ghost out of her grave.
Go you, my lord, go you, and bring her to me,
To my own chamber—haste !

The interview takes place, and the Princess

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

of Salerno, still more terrified, recounts it to the Cardinal, saying :

'Twas terrible, that strange and silent girl !
You told me not she was so beautiful.
Has she some Saracen spell ? My Lord, I would not
Face her again to win back Sicily !
When round her brow I bound the diamond wreath
I could but start to see what I had done,
For as she stood with all its light upon her,
Her lips just parted, with wide open eyes,
So cruel and so deadly was her silence
She seemed scarce human when I knelt before her,
And clasped her knees, she did not look at me
Or seem to hear me. I well nigh had cried
Is this indeed the Princess, Manfred's daughter,
Or is it, truly, Mary come from Heaven,
To take the prisoner's place and doom us all ?
My Lord, I shiver ! Oh will she have mercy ?
My Carlo, will she save him ? Say, Lord Cardinal,
Is it not yet too late ?

CARD.

No, lady, no !

Wonder not, if this long imprisoned girl
Was struck dumb by such sudden change of fortune ;
But they will keep their promise and his life
More profits than his death. Well Loria knows
His father's son.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

PRINCE. You think so? But—oh me!

PRINCESS. What if they rend him limb from limb
the moment

He steps on shore? What though the vesper hour
Be over—am I raving? Hear I not—
Do you not hear it too? Across the bay
The cry of “Muoja, muoja?” Look! look! look!
The enemy’s fleet is bursting into stars.
Oh God! That hoarse, wild roar! Carlo, my Carlo!

CARD. Lady, be calm! be calm! Why, see you not
The boat that bears the Lady Beatrice
Is but this moment lost among the lights?
’Tis her they greet so wildly, ’tis not “muoja,”
But “Viva! viva!” that you hear.

Beatrice, conveyed by a boat from the French
fleet, is transferred to the Sicilian, and approaches
Palermo.

LORIA. (*To BEATRICE.*) Come, lady, the day
brightens. Now you see
Shine clearer ’gainst yon purple mountain pile
The spires and cupolas of a fair town
(More like a Moorish than a Christian, though)
Along the sea-line. Look and feast your eyes;
For that’s Palermo. There was born your sister—
And you.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

BEAT. Those lovely, lovely sounds that tremble
Across the water towards us ?

LORIA.

Ha ! the town
Wakes, and from every steeple rings us welcome.
It seems to reel with joy ! And see the boats
Swarming to meet us ! What, fair lady, tears ?
Nay, nay, but laugh, as I do at the deed
That there was done while yet you pined in bonds.
That blessed March day when those very bells
Rang out to vespers, but no vesper prayer
Went up to Heaven : for choral anthems, then
The yell of “ Muoja ! muoja ! ”—for response
The groans of Frenchmen, curses, cries for mercy,
From all their thousand throats—but mercy ? none
For one false foreign felon knight or squire
Or man-at-arms, or craven stutterer
That strove for life to sound one little word,
Three little syllables, a shibboleth
That did its work, I tell you ! “ Ciciri ! ”
They could not for their lives. “ Ciciri ” slew them.
No mercy then for woman or for child !
Sicily had her daughters to avenge !
Till tingled both the ears of all who heard,
Till Charles his ivory sceptre gnawed for rage.
'Twill taste as bitter now.

The PRINCE OF SALERNO comes on deck

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

LORIA. Welcome, Sir Prince,
To Sicily.

PRINCE. I thank you ; 'twas not thus
I thought to see it for the first time.

LORIA. Thus,
And only thus, Sir.

PRINCE. Say, Lord Admiral,
Is that the lovely ghost you conjured up ?

LORIA. The Princess, Sir, King Manfred's
daughter.

PRINCE. Princess,
You were my father's captive. The revenge
Of fortune makes me yours—a willing one,
In bondage to your beauty. Let me kiss
Your hand and pray you to forgive my father.

BEAT. (*To LORIA*) Tell him, my lord,
I seek no vengeance for my wrongs ; it could not
Bring back the years his father robbed me of.

PRINCE. I hear you, lady. But in your stern lot
I had no part. And yet, forgive my father
For hiding in the dark such loveliness.
Since now you are come forth your charms are
brighter

For that long sad eclipse, and far outshine
The blossoms that unclosed beneath the sun.

BEAT. (*To LORIA*.) Pray him, my lord, to spare
me : let me withdraw.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

PRINCE. My lord, your fair Princess seems cold
and deaf

As yet to knightly homage.

LORIA.

Sir, your father

Sent her no Court Preceptor to enlighten

The darkness of her dungeon. Yet you see. . . .

Beatrice has landed and, entering the palace,
says to her attendants :

Tell me, tell me truly,

Am I on earth still ?

ATTEN.

'Tis the Palace hall,

Princess, and yonder see the Queen, your sister,

Hurrying to welcome you.

Enter QUEEN CONSTANCE

CONS. My Beatrice.

[*Embraces her.*

What, not a word ? Tremble not, thou art safe.

Sit by me here, upon this shaded couch.

Know'st thou me not ? Let me look first at thee,

White lily that thou art. Know'st thou me, dear ?

BEAT. They say thou art the Queen.

CONS.

Thy sister Constance.

My Beatrice ! my sister !

They embrace again and weep.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

Let us no more
Utter our joys in tears. Speak, speak to me ;
I have scarce heard thy voice yet.

BEAT. Have I died ?
And is this Paradise ?

SCENE.—*A Court and Fountain in the Ziza
Palace. CONSTANCE finds BEATRICE alone*

CONS. Why that start, that cry ?
What thus affrights thee, dear ?

BEAT. I was so lost
In gazing, wondering at this shower of light,
Striving to call all back to memory,
That when I heard your step, I thought, I thought,
My gaoler had surprised me. Still it haunts me,
That grating key. I never can quite trust
That I am free to open any door,
To pass from room to room, and step between
Those airy arches into Paradise.
Oh, feathery foliage, oh, delicious blue !
And none to call me back, to draw again
A sable curtain over this sweet world,
And lock me in my tomb once more.

CONS. Poor uncaged dove !

BEAT. Let me sit by you. Still was I in fancy

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

A prisoner on the moonlit, murmuring sea
'Twixt Naples and Palermo. Though I lay
On a soft couch and women waited on me,
And spoke to me in reverent, gentle tones,
And seemed so kind and good, yet still I thought
"They're only tricking me ; they know full well
I am but hastening to another prison."

CONS. And had you no faith, then, in the Admiral
Who brought you here in triumph ?

BEAT. Ah, you know not
How I was dizzied, dazzled by the lights,
The voices, the strange faces, the strange burst
Of golden moon and sea, when first my boat
Shot into the bright labyrinth of ships
Bestarred with torchlight, and a shout rose up—
A sound I ne'er had heard the like of—roar
On roar—'twas "Viva, viva, Beatrice !" —
They told me after, but I heard no words.
I knew not whether it were friend or foe,
Or love or hatred speaking in that din.
Then as I touched the deck a lofty form
Stood o'er me like a tower, and bowed his head
Before me and said something—what, I know not.
I was resigned to all, to death or life,
So savage was his smile. But his loud voice
In the night watches pealing o'er my head,
His heavy tread above me made my heart

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

Thrill with the fancy of a monstrous doom
Awaiting me at last. I shudder, Constance.
Do you not shudder at him?

CONS. What, my child,
The noble Loria, my own foster-brother,
My faithful knight, my Pedro's loyal soldier,
Your brave deliverer? There, in yonder hall,
Betwixt those pillars, on his knee before me
He swore to bring you to me. He has brought you.
Do you not thank him?

BEAT. *You* I kiss and thank,
And bless and worship ; you, my queen and angel !

CONS. What means this pause? in what dream
are you lost?

BEAT. A dream of something that comes back
to me.

A voice, a some one, as I stood prepared
To step into the boat that waited me,
A deep sweet voice—I think it trembled too—
A face too—'twas a young man's—beautiful
It seemed to me just in that fleeting moment.
I know he knelt to me, and kissed my hand,
And something said that had a proud, glad sound,
Then leapt into the boat—I think 'twas he—
And met me with his outstretched hand to guide me
As I stepped in. I had forgotten it ;
But now I think of it again

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

CONS.

I guess

That was brave Ruggiero, he who first
Brought the blest news that you were still in life,
And warned us of the mighty Provence fleet
Arrayed to crush us, and then won his knighthood
By service in our ranks. You soon shall see him,
And thank him.

BEAT.

Shall I ?

CONS.

When you came on deck,

That holy, happy daybreak ; when you saw
Palermo rise before you from the sea
(Just as I saw it when I left it first,
A child, a bride, with Pedro ; and again
When I came back after so many years
Of love and woe, woe for my dear slain father,
And love for my dear lord, my noble Pedro,
And showed my children first their mother's home
And birthplace). What felt you ? Surely no fear !

BEAT. I could not tell you—never !

CONS.

Try to tell me.

BEAT. When the Admiral

Pointed me out that silent, glittering city,
I could not answer him for tears. And then
Those bells ! Like messages from Paradise,
How suddenly they broke upon the air
And trembled in my heart ! I seemed new made—
Until he spoke some strange and horrible words,

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

That tinged the very domes and towers and spires,
And e'en the water with a tinge of blood,
And turned the angel music of the bells
Into a cry of anguish. What was done here ?
What horror has passed o'er this lovely place ?
As I paced hither up the Marble Road,*
All dizzied by the wild shouts of the crowd,
I thought a curse was on me, and on all
I looked upon, until I saw you come
Hurrying to meet me through the long, long hall,
And all in tears. I knew not who you were,
Until one said, "That lady is the Queen,
Your sister." Yet I knew not what they meant.
I could but think I was in Heaven at last,
And you the dear Madonna.

CONS.

Beatrice !

My Beatrice ! 'Tis you who bring a blessing
Out of the depths of long unhappy years ;
Sprung up from my slain father's desolate grave
You are a blossom tossed by wind and wave

* * * * *

BEAT. What was that horrid thing he told me of ?

* * * * *

As they advance from the Court into a suite
of Palace rooms, Beatrice exclaims :

* Cassaro.

BEATRICE OF SWABIA

See, O see ?

Who are those two who slowly come to meet us ?

See those two ladies. What, another *you* ?

Is there another Constance, then ?

CONS.

Not so.

'Tis we ourselves who, moving onward, throw

Our images on a mirror.

BEAT.

But who is she

Who walks beside thee ?

CONS.

'Tis thyself, my child.

Thou hast ne'er seen thine own face, then ?

BEAT.

Mine own ?

She with the brown-gold tresses and large eyes

That now are turned on me, and white, so white.

Am I like that ? Am I so beautiful ?

I did not know it.

CONS.

Yes, my lily-flower,

Most beautiful thou art !

After "Beatrice of Swabia," which was composed several years later than "Pedro the Cruel," we may place some single scenes, or parts of scenes, evidently intended for projected dramas, of various and uncertain dates.

THE TWO PAGES IN LOVE

1ST PAGE. She patted yesterday Almanzor's neck,
And praised his beauty to me.

Nay, but think—

2ND PAGE.

This morning, as I sang, she listened to me,
Bade me to sing again, and once, oh once,
I could just hear her voice come warbling in—
Three precious notes—with mine.

1ST PAGE. I'd give, oh not
Almanzor, but whate'er I own, besides,
That most I prize, but to know how to sing.
I'll tell you : I could die to win my knighthood
Before her eyes in battle ; I could live
Just long enough to see a single tear
Drop from her eyes. She is so kind and tender,
I think she would grieve for me.

THE TWO PAGES IN LOVE

2nd PAGE

Oh, but I

Could dream a happier death : I'd watch the
moment,

Would fling myself before her, kiss her hand,
And, ere she had time to chide, feel at my heart
The dagger of Don Pedro ; see her stand
Pleading for me—then perish, slain by love.

SCENE FROM A PROJECTED
DRAMA ON INEZ DE CASTRO

The QUEEN and DON PEDRO

QUEEN. Oh God! That ever I should live to see
My only son in arms against his father.

PEDRO. I know not whom you mean ; I have no
father.

QUEEN. I mean the King Alonzo.

PEDRO. What, the man
Who killed my wife ? With all my soul and strength
I curse that man, and curse myself as well
If e'er again I own him for my father,
If e'er again I own him for my King,
Or ever see his face except to slay him.
I curse the heritage that shall be mine
Long as he rules it.

QUEEN. Pedro ! Pedro ! Oh
Impious ! Thou freezest up my soul with horror.

SCENE FROM PROJECTED DRAMA

PEDRO. Oh mother ! mother ! Do you call me
impious ?

Oh mother ! mother ! Yet you knew my Inez !

QUEEN. Ah yes, my son, I knew her and I loved
her.

PEDRO. Well, say no more of her, nor dare again
Breathe any word of peace with Don Alonzo.

QUEEN. Alas ! I only came to speak of that.
What shall I say ?

PEDRO. If that was all your errand,
Madam, you may return back to your husband.

QUEEN. Does my son speak so to his mother ?

PEDRO. Yes,
And shall to all who speak of peace with *him*.

QUEEN. Oh, Pedro, he is old and broken down.
His hairs that were but grizzled, are all white
Through your rebellion.

PEDRO. Greybeard murderer !
Oh, mother, would that I had twenty brothers;
So might that man have twenty foes the more.

QUEEN. What shall I do ? You break my heart.

PEDRO. You weep
For *him*, then ? You are tender-hearted, mother.
Who weeps for me ?

Queen. Oh, by the Cross, my son,
And by the Virgin, and the Saints of Heaven,
I wept for you till I could weep no more.

MARY STUART

THE latest of these scattered fragments is a very short one—a conversation between Mary Stuart and one of her maids of honour, Mary Fleming, who subsequently married Maitland of Lethington.

QUEEN. So this sage Maitland is—pray tell me
why—

The humblest of my servants.

MARY. Credulous serpent,
To whom your half asleep and baby beauty
Plays harmless dove.

QUEEN. Thanks, dear, for teaching me
The secret of my charm. You mean, no doubt,
He thinks me a born fool.

MARY. Heaven pardon me,
I mean no less.

MARY STUART

QUEEN. Then he shall find in me
The most contented idiot of my kind,
Till I grow weary of his worship.

MARY. Then
You'll let him see you are as wise as he.

KING BALDWIN

THIS last fragment of all was written seven years after "Olga," from whose more modern theme she thus reverted to a mediæval story of purely romantic interest. This was the history of Baldwin IV., King of Jerusalem (1173-1185), a youth of noble and brilliant qualities, who died early a victim to leprosy, which fate she substituted an unfortunate love and subsequent insanity. It seems to have been meant rather for a series of pictorial scenes than for a drama; and all that we have of it is a narrative of the first meeting of the lovers told by a friend and follower of King Baldwin. Maria of Antioch (betrothed in this story to the King of Hungary, though in point of fact she eventually married the Emperor Manuel of Constantinople) has been travelling from Antioch to Jerusalem, and is met half-way by

KING BALDWIN

Baldwin, who, as liege lord of Bohemund, Prince of Antioch, was to deliver up the Princess to her future husband. The author's purpose was to represent Maria as dying tragically, and Baldwin's consequent grief and lunacy being cured by the illusion of her restoration to life in the person of a beautiful girl who extraordinarily resembled her.

The date of this poem is ascertained by that of a letter across which the rough draft of a passage in it is scrawled in pencil—"30 April 1888," just seven years before she died. It is her last known work.

KING BALDWIN

WILL you hear a tale

Of a young King, ...

Whose spirit, poised upon ærial heights,

And bathed in golden dawns, fell from heaven

Down, down to darkest gloom, and lingers yet

A prisoner in that night? Oh, how I've hoped—

What hoped not? from our beautiful St. George,

Sword of Jerusalem and Christendom.

Say, will you hear his story?

Tell me all.

It chanced, when summer brooded on the land,

KING BALDWIN

In gay procession southward rode a bride
From Antioch, sister to its baby prince,
By proxy to an unseen husband wed,
The far-off King of Hungary, to whom
She hastened with a joyous ignorance,
A queen and spouse already bound for ever.
To meet her with due honour, our young King
(Antioch's liege lord) a half-day's journey rode,
Dreaming, it may be, of the bride his own
High fancy sought, but still despaired to find.
The sultry heat still pressed with leaden weight
On all things ; the baked earth cracked as for
 breath,
When from below I heard the tramp of steeds
With a wild Syrian music ; then, just then,
A blackness fell upon the skies, and, bright
Against the storm-cloud, with gay banners shone
The advancing troop, and in their midst the bride
A picture on the purple shadow traced
In youthful sunbeams, and my heart turned cold ;
For with *his* eyes I saw her, saw his fate,
His dream made real, but too late, too late.
They met—he greeted, her young silver voice
Rang sweet and clear in answer ; one short moment
And then the storm-cloud burst !
And that white world of lightning sheeted us
All round with horror ; women shrieked, and steed

KING BALDWIN

Reared upwards, when the rushing floods of heaven
Stunned all our senses. Scarce I seemed to heed
Yet saw the King, checking his half-mad steed
One instant, snatch the bridle of Yolande ;
Then off they flew, like spirits of the storm :
Flew like two destinies, linked hand in hand.
I caught a lightning glimpse of either form,
I heard like fairy bells a girl's laugh ring ;
And in the darkness vanished bride and King.

Our routed troops dispersed by twos and threes
Hither and thither ; on the plain some left
Their smitten horses rolling while they sought,
As did the King, a refuge in the hills,
And found it where he found it—at the gate
Of a half-ruined convent, desolate,
Dwelt in by aged monks. The doors flew wide,
And through them passed the King, and that fair
 bride,
Whose hair streamed back upon the wind that
 day ;
Ah me, that wild young queen, the tempest o'er,
Like a tired child after her short hour's play,
Sleeps in her marble tomb for evermore !

In time these gloomy walls received us all ;
And by the bright hearth of the convent hall,
Darkness without and ceaseless thunder rolls,
This young impetuous pair of happy souls

KING BALDWIN

Talked all that eve in beautiful extremes,
And high heroic harmony of dreams.
Nothing too high, too low, too great, too small,
But with heaven's golden light they touched it all.

The reader may perhaps find some monotony in the recurrence of familiar situations, types of character, and periods of history in several of the above fragments. It is explained by the fact that the author was in constant search of one all-sufficient subject for the ideal drama which ever haunted her thoughts, and that she tried one after another, laying by each as another more perfect realisation of her aim presented itself. She sought her subjects always in the same region of historical romance, partly from her own passion for, and minute acquaintance with, history ; partly because the distant and obscure gave greater scope to her fancy, and allowed those glimpses of the supernatural which had such a charm for her. But her aim was ever to portray some strong human feeling, some situation which should develop unwonted emotion and tragic action of an exceptional yet not un-

KING BALDWIN

natural kind, heroic goodness, and despairing guilt, bitter reaction, disenchantment, all the mystery and grandeur of human life and will, in its struggles with destiny.

Some, it is hoped, will be able to imagine with what a conflict of pleasure and 'pain these un-guessed-of relics were disentombed, too late to pour forth to their author the manifold feelings they had awakened. The reader will perhaps be as much surprised as the survivor was, and as others who have seen them have been, that such work should have been cast aside by the writer as unworthy of completion.

No doubt the indifference with which she grew to regard her own verses was strengthened by her belief in their former failure to make a mark in the world. Though they had received eulogistic notices, and had interested private friends, they had not made for her such a name as to stimulate her to further efforts. "I have long known that there is no public for us," she once said calmly, in almost her last days, to her disappointed fellow-worker, who hoped and strove still, after *she* had ceased to do so. But she was

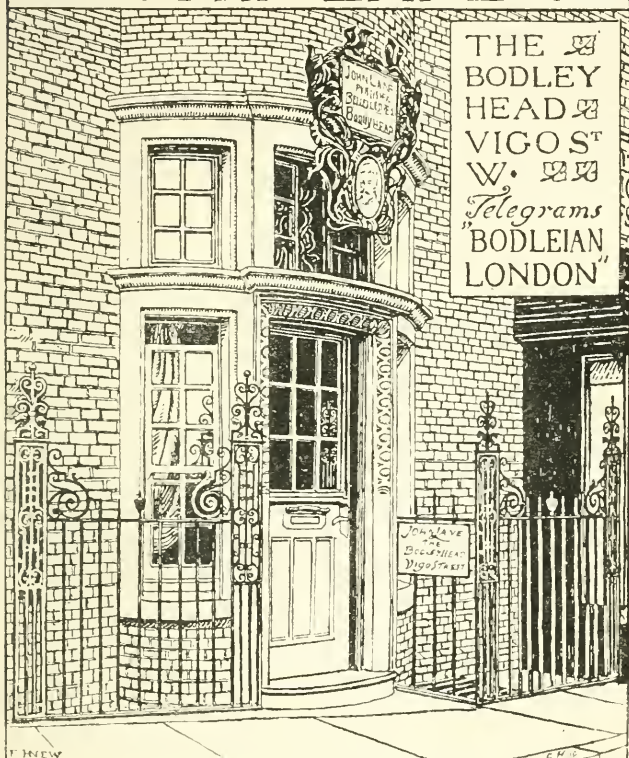
KING BALDWIN

always quite resigned and, silent and all unnoted, continued her life in a poetical fairy-land, imagining and even composing what she had wholly ceased to write down.

It may prove a dream as unrealised as her earlier modest expectations were, but that these utterances are worthy of a general hearing, and may gain it, now that her gentle spirit can no longer feel pleasure or pain in the result, is the hope and belief in which the survivor now offers them to the world.

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